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Fifty-ninth session

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19th plenary meeting
Monday, 4 October 2004, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Ping ..... (Gabon)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda items 52 and 54 (*continued*)

Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly

Strengthening of the United Nations system

Report of the Secretary-General (A/59/354)

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): We welcome this joint debate, since we believe that United Nations reform must be comprehensive in order to be successful. While the Secretariat of the Organization continues to do its part with regard to reform and has achieved significant improvements over the past few years, we as Member States continue to lag behind in our own efforts. I will therefore concentrate my remarks on the intergovernmental area.

Mr. President, thanks to the hard work and leadership of your predecessor, President Julian Hunte, which led to the adoption of two resolutions in December 2003 and July 2004, a process of General Assembly revitalization deserving of that name is finally under way. The revitalization process has received a jump-start that we must translate into action so as to achieve further progress leading up to the anniversary session and the major event in 2005.

After the adoption of the second resolution on revitalization by the General Assembly in July, we were among the Member States that expressed concern that the measures agreed upon did not go far enough. Nevertheless, we acknowledge that the package adopted goes far beyond earlier initiatives. After many years of frustration and stalemate, we now have reason to believe that change is indeed possible.

Some of the measures adopted address areas of particular importance, such as cooperation with the Security Council; more use of interactive debates and informal briefings; monitoring of the follow-up of resolutions; and reduction of the unworkable load of documentation and of the number of resolutions.

These decisions need to pass the test of practical application in the daily workings of this Assembly. We have reached a sound common understanding of what is needed, but this understanding will have the desired effect only if we also agree on the ways to put it into practice. Our next target date is April 2005, and we believe that we must concentrate our efforts on further streamlining the agenda, as well as reducing documentation and the number of resolutions this Assembly adopts.

The resolutions on revitalization also call on the Main Committees to contribute their share to the process. In the preparation of the work of the Committees for this session, the spirit of revitalization can already be felt. We hope that this spirit will be reinforced during the coming months and will lead to greater efficiency in the work of the Committees. Resolution 58/316 requests the Secretary-General to report on all aspects of the implementation of the agreed measures in September 2005. This is crucial in order to sustain the momentum and to ensure

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appropriate follow-up and completion of the reform measures. The report on the success of the measures taken so far should be comprehensive, and it should trigger an irreversible process. We hope that this debate will help carry the momentum on revitalization for the coming months.

In the interplay of the main organs of the United Nations, this Assembly should play a crucial role. It was conceived as the most important part of a system of checks and balances, but it no longer fulfils this function effectively. This is particularly lamentable at a time when the Security Council is more active than ever and reaching into novel areas, such as law-making. Meanwhile, the General Assembly, the organ designed for inclusiveness and transparency and which should provide a certain counterbalance to the Council, is far from using all its powers effectively and efficiently. This is a dangerous development that jeopardizes the institutional and political balance forming the basis of genuine multilateralism.

The General Assembly, as a result of the process of revitalization, must again find its role as the prime representative of the United Nations membership in a system of checks and balances among the different organs. In this respect, the year 2005 will be our next destination. It is clear that 2005 will bring about a major event, and it will be marked by great political momentum. In terms of reform, this momentum must not only be directed at the reform of the Security Council. The big dividing lines will not become smaller if we concentrate our efforts on this single issue, important as it is, without looking at other aspects.

Enlargement of the Security Council is naturally the talk of the day, as the just-concluded general debate illustrated very clearly. However, enlargement of the Council alone will not make this Organization stronger and more effective, so we must continue to look at the overall picture, in which the interplay of the main organs and thus the role of this Assembly play a decisive role. We hope that the report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change will be a source of inspiration and provide political momentum to streamline the reform process and move it in a good direction.

We appreciate the excellent work done by the Secretary-General on a great number of issues, in particular in the implementation of his 2002 report on the strengthening of the United Nations. In many respects, the Secretariat has been more capable of internal reform then we, the Member States, have been at the intergovernmental level. We appreciate in particular the fact that the United Nations system presents itself in a clearer and more accessible manner and that improvements have been made in the budget cycle.

We also thank the Deputy Secretary-General, Louise Fréchette, for presenting the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations. We agree that we have to make the United Nations a more outward-looking organization that connects the global with the local. Better interaction with civil society, as well as with other relevant actors such as regional organizations, the private sector and the media, is an important step in that direction.

Mr. Kazykhanov (Kazakhstan): Last week, we all witnessed a broad discussion on the issue of the strengthening of the role of the United Nations, involving heads of State and Government and foreign ministers. A common understanding of the need to constantly adapt the Organization to the changing world around us so that it can meet the challenges of our time is an important outcome of that debate.

It has been said many times, and never better than by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, that in order to make our Organization more effective and efficient, we must be well-prepared to change with the times, constantly adjusting to complex international challenges. But we cannot meet the new challenges and address the acute problems of today by continuing to rely on old approaches. The central issue of international relations is to turn the United Nations into an effective tool designed to strengthen regional and global security systems, including the regime of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and to manage globalization processes. Member States should provide the Organization with all the necessary resources, so that it can perform its multiple tasks effectively.

As a matter of principle, we consider it important to ensure a balance in the functioning of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, as envisioned in the Charter of this Organization. We insist on the need to strengthen the role of the General Assembly in settling the most important issues facing humanity today. In our view,

the efforts of the international community to combat terrorism and to settle armed conflicts can be made more effective only on the basis of such an approach.

From the very beginning, Kazakhstan has supported the Secretary-General's decision to establish a high-level panel on United Nations reform. We believe that the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, with its broad mandate, will arrive at an acceptable solution to this crucial issue of today. We are looking forward to the Panel's report containing recommendations on the changes we need to make for the Organization to be effective against the threats of the twenty-first century. Kazakhstan is ready to be actively involved in the discussion of that important document.

Regional arrangements play an increasingly important role in the collective security system. Better coordination between them and the United Nations will go a long way towards building up the capacity for effective response in the field. In this context, Kazakhstan calls for the establishment of a council of regional organizations, under the auspices of the Secretary-General. We also believe that that proposal reflects the need to strengthen global multilateral cooperation.

General Assembly resolutions 58/126 and 58/316, which are aimed at enhancing the authority of the Assembly, confirmed the fundamental role of this Organization in international affairs. They gave a clear indication of the Assembly's recognition that, for the United Nations, reform must be an ongoing process and that the General Assembly must turn the spotlight of reform on itself.

We take note of the fact that there has been some progress in the revitalization of the General Assembly and the improvement of its methods of work. At the same time, we believe that this process should not undercut the thrust of the reforms designed primarily to strengthen the authority of the Assembly and to improve the effectiveness of its actions. We must bear in mind that decisions leading to adjustments to the agenda are among the most sensitive that Member States have to make.

We commend you, Mr. President, for your resolve to continue to press ahead with the General Assembly reform initiatives that were approved late last year. We share the view that every effort must be made to halt the erosion of the strengths of the Assembly as the major United Nations forum for debating international issues.

The Secretary-General has made it clear that improved relations between the United Nations and civil society is an important element of the programme of reform. To that end, he appointed the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations.

We welcome the report prepared by the Panel, which has made a valuable contribution to the reform process of the United Nations. It offers innovative ideas aimed at strengthening partnership with civil society in humanitarian and development activities and contains concrete measures to increase the participation of civil society in the work of the United Nations.

The Panel makes a compelling case for the United Nations to become a more outward-looking Organization and connect the global with the local. We also believe that expanding and deepening the relationship with non-governmental organizations will further strengthen the intergovernmental debates on global issues.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that Kazakhstan will continue to exert every effort to ensure that the Organization occupies its rightful place in world affairs.

Mr. Kim Sam-hoon (Republic of Korea): During the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, Member States deliberated at length on ways to revitalize the General Assembly. Although resolutions 58/316 and 58/126 were not as comprehensive as we had initially hoped they would be, the Republic of Korea is nonetheless pleased with the progress that has been made as a result. For example, the Office of the President of the General Assembly has been considerably strengthened, in line with part A, paragraph 10, of the annex to resolution 58/126. Moreover, beginning this year, the agenda of the General Assembly is being organized under headings corresponding to the priorities of the Organization, which has made it significantly more approachable and accessible.

Nevertheless, despite this progress there is more work to be done. It is vital that we maintain the momentum for change. As the Republic of Korea addressed the broad issue of General Assembly

revitalization during the fifty-eighth session, I would now like to highlight specific areas of reform that we believe should be addressed during the fifty-ninth session.

First, we would like to stress the importance of allowing the General Committee to play the leading role in advising the General Assembly on the efficient organization, coordination and management of its work, as stated in part E, paragraph 5 (b) of the annex to resolution 58/316. The General Committee must meet regularly, and we would like to see the President continue to remain actively involved in the work of the General Committee.

More specifically, we would like to see the General Committee consider the biennialization, triennialization, clustering and elimination customary agenda items and to make recommendations as soon as possible. As Member States have made clear, the rationalization of the agenda must be an ongoing process.

Secondly, we recall that document A/58/CRP.7, on control and limitation on documentation, was not adequately discussed during the previous session. We hope that it will become a major item for discussion during the fifty-ninth session. As document A/58/CRP.7 correctly notes, the sheer volume of documentation required from the Secretariat is preventing it from offering value-added and in-depth analysis on important subject matter. Indeed, last year alone the United Nations produced no less than 318 different resolutions — a truly mind-boggling number. It has become almost impossible for Member States to effectively absorb what is being provided. Therefore, there must be serious discussions on ways to curtail the quantity, length and frequency of documentation, and we hope that concrete and effective measures in this respect are taken during the fifty-ninth session.

Thirdly, as stated in part A, paragraph 6 of the annex to resolution 58/126, we urge the President of the General Assembly to meet regularly, perhaps once every month, with the Presidents of both the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. We believe that that practice would not only strengthen the role and authority of the General Assembly but also allow for better coordination among the major organs of the United Nations.

Fourthly, the Republic of Korea would like to see more interactive debates take place during discussions, not only in the Main Committees but also during General Committee meetings. We hope that, as outlined in resolution 58/316, a revitalized General Committee will soon recommend to the General Assembly a programme and format for such interactive debates.

On the issue of strengthening the United Nations system, while my delegation recognizes that the issue of civil society participation at the United Nations has a long and complex history, we concur with the Secretary-General that expanding and deepening the relationship with non-governmental organizations will further strengthen the United Nations and the intergovernmental debates on issues of global import.

Thus we welcome the Secretary-General's report (A/59/354) and commend the efforts of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations, led by former President Fernando Henrique Cardoso of Brazil, on which the Secretary-General's report is based. In general, we find the recommendations contained in the report to be comprehensive and forward-looking in making the participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) at the United Nations more meaningful and responsive to the changing needs and expectations of both global and civil society. We will carefully study the recommendations with a view to working with others to turn them into concrete action.

In conclusion, the Republic of Korea believes that the revitalization of the General Assembly and the strengthening of the United Nations system must be an ongoing and dynamic process. Member States must look beyond their own individual priorities towards the greater collective good if we are to truly strengthen the effectiveness and efficiency of this global body. The General Assembly is the sole global forum in which all nations and peoples have a voice; we must never allow that voice to be muffled due to organizational inefficiencies. The Republic of Korea pledges its full support for the revitalization of the General Assembly and the strengthening of the United Nations system, and we urge Member States to sustain the momentum of reform.

Mr. Mwangi (Kenya): Mr. President, my delegation wishes once again to extend its congratulations to you on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. We look forward to fruitful deliberations under

your stewardship. Kenya appreciates the excellent work carried out by your predecessor, especially with regard to the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly and the strengthening of the United Nations system.

Over the years, the General Assembly has grappled with the issue of its own revitalization. As the Assembly has been overburdened by its own agenda, it is gratifying to note that, during the last session, efforts were expended to cluster, biannualize, triannualize and even eliminate items on the customary agenda of the Assembly. This was in accordance with part B, paragraph 5, of the annex to resolution 58/126, which postulated that:

> "It would be advantageous for the General Assembly to have a shorter agenda to ensure the fullest discussions of all issues, so that its decisions may have greater impact."

That is the direction we need to take.

As regards the Main Committees, Kenya supports the rescheduling of the work of the Committees and the idea of conceptualizing the agenda around the priorities of the Organization. My delegation believes that improved procedures and working methods as well as the rationalization of the agenda of the Main Committees would be an important step towards the revitalization of the Assembly.

Improving procedures and working methods is not an end in itself. It is also important to examine ways and means of enhancing the capacity of the Secretariat to enable it to serve the aspirations of the Main Committees. The Secretariat should therefore be provided with the requisite resources and personnel for it to perform as expected. The Secretariat's ability to generate documents on time has, in the recent past, been seriously constrained. Documentation delays prevent Main Committees from discharging their work smoothly and in a timely fashion. This is an area we need to streamline with a view to taking remedial steps.

We decry the continuing emasculation of the General Assembly by other organs of the Organization. In the process of the reinvention of the United Nations, the starting point should be the General Assembly itself. It should regain its role as the principal decision-making and policy-making body. Far-reaching decisions that have great impact on global affairs must be made by the voice of the majority. That voice can be found only in the General Assembly. Multilateralism should prevail.

With regard to the Security Council, my delegation believes that it should be transparent, responsive and democratized in order to meet the security threats of the twenty-first century. The Economic and Social Council has to undergo drastic surgery for it to meet the ever-changing economic and social challenges, particularly those in developing countries. The Council should meet more frequently and establish closer working relations in coordination with international financial institutions, specialized agencies and United Nations programmes. The United Nations institutions should find a new synergy so that they can work for the betterment of humankind in the areas of peace, sustainable development and human dignity.

Concerning the strengthening of the United Nations, Kenya supports and welcomes the efforts made by Secretary-General Kofi Annan in this area. We urge him to continue to pursue efforts to explore and establish mutually beneficial relations with non-traditional groups and bodies. The recent report of the high-level Panel on civil society is clear case in point of the efforts by the Secretary-General to strengthen the United Nations system. The report contains positive suggestions as to how the United Nations could maximize the potential of civil society to improve the effectiveness of the international system. Though the overall report is commendable, some of the recommendations still require our concerted assessment and review. For instance, the recommendation on the relationship of civil society vis-à-vis the General Assembly could, in our view, contravene Article 71 of the United Nations Charter.

My delegation welcomes the appointment of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, established by the Secretary-General during the previous session of the General Assembly. It is our expectation that, when the Panel delivers its report at the end of the year, its verdict will revolutionize the current state of the United Nations. The panel consulted widely, and we expect that the views expressed — particularly those of the developing countries, which form the majority of the membership — will be taken into consideration.

In conclusion, Kenya is fully committed to the process of the revitalization of the Organization. My delegation would like to see a strong United Nations with the capacity to effectively and efficiently moderate the delicate, multifaceted and rapid changes the world is experiencing. The United Nations has to be vibrant and reassert itself in its inherent role of maintaining global peace and security on the one hand and enhancing accelerated economic development on the other.

Mr. Sychov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The delegation of the Republic of Belarus attaches great importance to strengthening and reforming the United Nations. On the eve of its sixtieth anniversary, the Organization's relevance with respect to the modern realities of international politics and its capacity to play the central role in overcoming global threats and challenges of the twenty-first century have posed sharper and pivotal questions.

Belarus supports the efforts of the Secretary-General aimed at improving the Organization's activities through encouraging dialogue among States on the major aspects of reform. Following the presentation of the report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change we expect broad consultations with Member States will be organized to discuss the report's recommendations for transforming the Organization and improving its activities in the area of the maintenance of international peace and security.

Today no one doubts the need to modernize the United Nations in order to deal effectively with the tasks before it in the twenty-first century. The only doubt concerns the inevitability and real need for fundamental institutional change of the United Nations system — with the exception of the question of enlargement of the Security Council — and the necessity of reconsidering the basic principles of the United Nations activities enshrined in its Charter. The existing mechanisms of the Charter, in particular in the field of maintenance of international peace and security, have proved to be quite viable and the possibilities for their adaptation to the changing international situation have not been exhausted.

The basic tenet of Belarus's position on the problem of United Nations reform is that the intention should not be to belittle the significance of the principles of the Charter or seek to revise them. That approach is by no means an expression of conservatism, but, rather, a reflection of our country's desire to enhance the integrity of the fundamental basis of the Organization, which is an important prerequisite for the peaceful coexistence of States and the attainment of a just international order.

Further to the approach we have outlined, Belarus, together with other Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement, sponsored a draft resolution, entitled "Reaffirming the central role of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security and the promotion of international cooperation", which was adopted by the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session as resolution 58/317. That resolution is a significant instrument for finding ways to increase the efficacy of the United Nations and helped to elaborate guidelines for the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change in preparing its reform proposals.

In the context of the Secretary-General's efforts towards strengthening and democratizing the United Nations, our delegation on the whole has a positive assessment of the outcome of deliberations of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations. At the same time, it is critical to note that broadening of interaction of the United Nations with non-governmental organizations should be organized in such a manner as not to put in doubt the role of the United Nations as an effective forum of intergovernmental communication.

The delegation of Belarus would like to draw attention to such promising developments towards the revitalization of the United Nations activities and its democratization as the creation of mechanisms to expand the participation of parliamentarians in the activities of the Organization. At present, the Inter-Parliamentary Union positively contributes to the development of contacts between parliamentarians and the United Nations through the annual parliamentary hearings held during the substantive part of the General Assembly session. Other means of enhancing the parliamentary dimension in United Nations activities, particularly in the work of its principal representative organ, the General Assembly, could also be developed.

Revitalization of work of the General Assembly is one of the major focuses of the process of strengthening and reforming the United Nations. We welcome the steps undertaken at the fifty-eighth

session by the previous President of the General Assembly, Mr. Julian Hunte, in order to stimulate discussion on how to revitalize the work of the General Assembly and increase its authority within the United Nations system. General Assembly resolutions 58/126 and 58/316 established a good basis for us to continue our work during this session on further measures to strengthen the status of the General Assembly and on laying the groundwork for the effective implementation of its authority under the Charter.

The General Assembly is the main representative organ of the United Nations, whose capacity must be fully utilized for the interests of advocating a multilateral approach to the resolution of international problems. While advocating the process of revitalization of the General Assembly, the Republic of Belarus would warn against its bureaucratization and an unjustifiably increased burden on the United Nations budget as a consequence of reform measures.

We propose a comprehensive analysis of the consequences for the entire United Nations system resulting from the possible change in the schedule of work of the Main Committees of the General Assembly. We share the opinion that any reordering of the schedules of work of all six Committees is advisable within the traditional period of their functioning, from September to December.

Therefore, we call upon you, Mr. President, to concentrate your efforts on solving the priority problems related to the revitalization of the General Assembly. In that regard, Belarus considers priority should be given to further measures to improve the working methods of the Assembly by optimizing and rationalizing the agenda, by refraining from the practice of adopting overlapping and repeating resolutions, by cutting down the length of debates on agenda items and by placing emphasis on the quality of resolutions.

Belarus backs the measures aimed at strengthening the status of the General Assembly among the major organs of the United Nations system, as well as reconsidering its current relations with other principal statutory organs. We consider that the establishment of a mechanism of coordination between the presidents of the General Assembly, Security Council and Economic and Social Council, in conformity with resolution 58/126, will constitute a first practical step towards the enhancement of the authority of the General Assembly.

In conclusion, allow me to reassure you, Mr. President, that the delegation of Belarus intends to cooperate fully in the task of elaborating positive, generally acceptable ways to strengthen the Organization and revitalize its General Assembly.

Mr. Neil (Jamaica): The representative of Algeria spoke this morning on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and we support his statement. We only wish now to add a few points of emphasis from the standpoint of the delegation of Jamaica.

The primacy of the General Assembly and its central place as the chief deliberative organ of the United Nations is established in the Charter. To strengthen the United Nations and to strengthen multilateralism we should regard revitalization of the General Assembly as a major priority.

During the past session under the energetic leadership of the outgoing President, the process was advanced by the adoption of resolutions 58/126 and 58/316, which contain provisions to improve working relations between the various organs, to organize and rationalize the agenda, to improve working methods and to strengthen the office of the presidency. As this is an evolving process there is unfinished business to be worked on during this session, principally in three areas.

First, there is a need to reorder the work of the General Assembly to spread its work over the year and to dilute concentration at the autumn session. This has the advantage of extending the activity of the Assembly and allowing for an increased level of participation by all delegations. We realize that there are different options which should be considered, and which are viable alternatives to the holding of two main sessions, which we still regard as being the best option.

The second area is the reform of the mandate and composition of the General Committee to improve its capability to manage and direct the work of the Assembly. Finally, there is need for further work on rationalizing the agenda and for improving methods of work.

Beyond those structural changes, there are actions at the level of Member States which should be taken to invigorate the Assembly.

First, the Assembly should debate topical issues facing the international community, while respecting the narrow limitations of Article 12 of the Charter. As the voice of the international community, the General Assembly should be convened more frequently to give expression to world opinion on the critical issues of the day. The Charter and rules of procedure provide for this and only requires the political action of Member States.

The second area is improvement in the quality of resolutions which should be less repetitive, with more substantive content concerning their pronouncements on current developments.

The third area is movement towards a more interactive framework for discussions and away from the current dull monotony of formal statements. Tradition is hard to break but innovative techniques can be tried to enliven the debates in the Main Committees.

The fourth area is implementation. The norms and policies established by the General Assembly should be implemented. Although these may not be legally binding, the moral force of world opinion should be respected and special monitoring should be arranged by the Secretariat and reflected in the reports of the Secretary-General to the Assembly.

Turning now to the agenda item on the strengthening of the United Nations system, we have some preliminary remarks on the report of the Secretary-General concerning the recommendations of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations (A/59/354).

We wish to join in acknowledging the importance of engagement with civil society and the value of the contributions of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to United Nations activities. They have an important role to play in promoting the goals of the United Nations and in providing innovative ideas and expertise, especially from those NGOs which have a specialized focus. We are therefore in general support of enhancing their involvement.

Having said that, we have to be careful that in the process, we avoid compromising the intergovernmental nature of our Organization. In that context, we have concerns about how NGO participation can be worked out in deliberations of the more political organs of the United Nations System.

Experience has shown that in the area of economic and social development the contribution of NGO participation has the greatest potential. However, some problems have arisen in the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, because the levels of politicalization of its activities have given rise to some concern. For that reason, we believe that in any new initiatives for participation in the two major political organs there is need to proceed with caution. Sensitive issues arise where political agendas are pursued by certain NGOs which lead to complications in relation to the internal affairs of States.

The second area of concern is the issue of compliance with the rules of engagement. The Economic and Social Council has faced difficulties with enforcement of the rules, especially where political encouragement is given to NGOs to agitate against Member States. This sometimes has proven to be disruptive. These concerns led us to express some reservations with regard to the proposals concerning NGOs in relation to the General Assembly and the Security Council.

In our view, Sir, we should continue to develop the programme for civil society participation in relation to the activities of the Economic and Social Council and the related conferences of the United Nations in which NGOs participation has been constructive and valuable.

Using that approach, we are inclined to give support to the initiatives proposed in part VI of the Secretary-General's report (A/59/354) and to encourage more engagement with NGOs at the country level. That is an important means of promoting the objectives of the United Nations, especially in achieving the social and economic objectives of the United Nations. We believe that is where the emphasis should be placed at this time.

Finally, with respect to partnerships, there are still a number of questions which need clarification about how partnerships are to be implemented. Those relate principally to issues of process and accountability. It is not clear how they are to be monitored in the intergovernmental context and we have concerns how they will relate to the traditional channels for development cooperation.

These are matters in which we expect to have further consultations conducted under your auspices. We have confidence in your leadership in carrying

forward the process of reform and revitalization. You can count on the full support and cooperation of the delegation of Jamaica.

Mr. Rastam (Malaysia): I should like to associate my delegation with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Algeria on agenda item 52 entitled "Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly", in his capacity as coordinator of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) working group on reform of the United Nations and revitalization of the General Assembly.

I join him and other speakers in paying tribute to His Excellency Mr. Julian Hunte, President of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, for his energetic leadership on the issue of the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

We now look towards your leadership and vision, Sir, in bringing forward the ongoing process to which Mr. Hunte had given great impetus and commitment. My delegation stands ready to support you in your efforts.

Leaders who spoke at the general debate over the past two weeks had overwhelmingly expressed their support for the need to reform the United Nations and strengthen the Organization to enable it to face threats and challenges of the twenty-first century. Further to the call for reform and the strengthening of the United Nations, Member States have also raised questions pertaining to the General Assembly and its role within the framework of the United Nations system.

The role of the General Assembly has been clearly outlined in Chapter IV of the Charter. As reaffirmed in the Millennium Declaration, the General Assembly is the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative body of the United Nations. The Assembly should be the true symbol of multilateralism that embodies the set of ideals and principles which Member States depend upon.

The General Assembly has adopted resolutions 58/126 and 58/316 as a means to revitalize the General Assembly, enhance its authority and role and improve its methods of work. Malaysia reaffirms its support for the work done thus far. We concur with the points raised earlier by Algeria on how we should move forward. There is certainly an urgent need to ensure the effective, full and proper implementation of the two resolutions.

It is true that, prior to resolutions 58/126 and 58/316, other resolutions to revitalize the General Assembly had been adopted and some improvements to the workings of the General Assembly had been achieved. However, there are still many other areas that have yet to be addressed. The key to success lies in the implementation of those resolutions. That aspect should be stressed above all else. A proper monitoring mechanism must be put in place to ensure that General Assembly resolutions are implemented. We must find ways of ensuring that the Assembly's decisions and recommendations are pursued, complied with and sincerely and wholeheartedly implemented by all parties concerned. Sponsors of resolutions could play a more responsible role in ensuring not only ownership, but also follow-up, accountability and implementation. The role of the Secretariat is also crucial in that regard.

In continuing our work on the process of revitalizing the General Assembly, my delegation believes in the need to also focus on the following: strengthening of the Office of the President of the General Assembly; improvement in the methods of work; further rationalization of the agenda, resolutions and reports; and streamlining of the work of the main Committees in keeping with the General Assembly rules of procedure.

With regard to agenda item 54, my delegation recalls General Assembly resolution 58/269 of 23 December 2003, regarding strengthening of the United Nations, which focuses on improving the methods of work and practices of the United Nations. We believe that all Member States should continue to seriously look into the urgent implementation of the recommendations made under that resolution, especially on the full participation of the Member States in the planning, programming and budgetary process of the United Nations.

We should emphasize here that the United Nations system is essentially an intergovernmental institution. However, we note the Secretary-General's recommendations regarding the involvement of non-governmental organizations on issues of mutual dialogue, as contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/59/354) in response to the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations. We are willing to further examine those recommendations with other delegations and the Secretariat.

Malaysia continues to fully subscribe to the position of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) on the strengthening of the United Nations, as stated in the final document of the thirteenth NAM Summit, held in Kuala Lumpur in February 2003, and the final document of the fourteenth Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Durban in August 2004. The issue is addressed in the NAM documents in a more all-encompassing manner not restricted to questions relating to the improvement of procedures and methods of work in the United Nations organs.

The Non-Aligned Movement is focused on the larger picture of the need to reform and strengthen the United Nations system as a whole. It calls for a comprehensive reform of all United Nations organs, including the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. This is in order to uphold the centrality of the United Nations in current global affairs, as envisaged under the Charter, especially in the maintenance of international peace and security and in promoting international cooperation. This is even more relevant today in view of the many new challenges facing the Organization. My delegation looks forward to the opportunity at this session to further discuss the relevant issues relating to this question.

Mr. Butagira (Uganda): Since I am taking the floor for the first time at the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, allow me, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Uganda and on my own account, to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of this world Assembly. I have every confidence in your proven skills and guidance.

The report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations (A/58/817 and Corr.1) is thoughtful and contains good recommendations. I congratulate the members of the Panel for work well done. I also congratulate the Secretary-General for his excellent report (A/59/354). Time does not permit me to give my detailed views on these reports.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector generally play a vital role in forging useful partnerships with Governments to realize development goals and other goals of the United Nations, especially at the grass-roots level. However, as important as that role is, NGOs should not be elevated to the level of Governments. They are not accountable to the people, as responsible Governments are. Their mandate is, thus, limited in character. Their role should be of a consultative nature. I therefore do not accept the proposal by the Secretary-General to give NGOs accreditation to directly participate in the sessions of the General Assembly. The General Assembly is a world inter-governmental parliament, and its members are duly accredited Government delegations from Member States.

That said, the important role played by NGOs in advancing the work of the United Nations can hardly be overemphasized. At the country level, NGOs of different categories play a useful role in realizing the Millennium Development Goals. They are engaged, for instance, in providing safe drinking water, sanitation, health clinics, microcredit facilities to women, literacy and immunization campaigns, HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns and humanitarian assistance, especially in war-torn areas. I welcome the Panel's recommendation of extending consultations at the country level. Through workshops and other forums, NGOs can engage in dialogue with various United Nations agencies, coordinated by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Coordinators on the one hand and Governments on the other. In this regard, the Panel's recommendation to strengthen the capacity of UNDP Resident Coordinators to bolster the capacity of NGOs to render useful advisory services is welcome, especially if they form advisory groups or committees.

At the General Assembly level, consultations and dialogue with civil society have often taken the form of panel and roundtable discussions, usually through the Main Committees or sessions of the Economic and Social Council and its functional Commissions. I would propose, however, that a consultative forum be created in which Member States can interact with civil society on particular topics under consideration by the General Assembly on the margins of Assembly sessions, rather than before the sessions begin, as is proposed by the Secretary-General. That would minimize the expense of hosting two consecutive sessions.

I commend the Security Council for instituting a dialogue with civil society. Participation by civil society representatives in open debate on some issues has made a useful contribution to the outcome of Security Council deliberations. However, there should be clear guidelines regarding their participation. In particular, their reports not only should be circulated to

members of the Security Council, but also should be made available to other Member States, especially when a report makes allegations against a Member State in some way.

Lastly, I welcome the Secretary-General's decision to establish a trust fund to enhance the capacity of non-governmental organizations at the country level to engage with Governments on issues regarding the work of the United Nations.

Mr. Gopala Menon (Singapore): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session and to reaffirm Singapore's full support for you. My predecessor worked with the last three Presidents of the Assembly as a facilitator in this area of work. Singapore has always tried to play a constructive role in the ongoing deliberations on the revitalization of the General Assembly, and we will continue to do likewise at the current session.

I was told that, last year, the question of the relevance of the United Nations dominated many discussions, for reasons that are fully understandable. I am encouraged that that question no longer holds centre stage and that the debate has moved on to how we can best deal with the threats, challenges and change with which we are confronted.

For small States like Singapore, the effectiveness and relevance of the United Nations are of paramount importance. In that regard, the role of the General Assembly — as the principal norm-making organ of the United Nations — cannot be overestimated. If we were to take away the United Nations and its associated framework of international law, a new world order would emerge based on the law of the jungle. That kind of a world would be less favourable for many countries.

The United Nations will soon be turning 60. In some ways, it is an irony that United Nations Headquarters is in New York. Here, amid gleaming ultramodern buildings equipped with the latest technology, United Nations Headquarters is an antique that does not even have a sprinkler system from the fourth floor upwards. If the chief executive officer of one of the leading international companies based in New York were to spend a short time with us as a representative to experience how the United Nations works, he or she would probably suffer a tremendous shock.

As with this building, with the passage of time come other problems associated with ageing. Just as old equipment and systems are often jettisoned in favour of new and better equipment, old ways of doing things need to be constantly re-evaluated. Unfortunately, old habits die hard. Both the working methods of the Assembly and the substance of our discussions can at times be disconnected from developments in the real world outside, and that in turn raises questions about the relevance of the Assembly.

Notwithstanding the inefficient way in which we often go about doing our business, Singapore is realistic enough to recognize that the United Nations cannot simply jettison overnight the way in which it operates. A physical building can be refurbished or even completely rebuilt if its occupants can temporarily relocate elsewhere. Unfortunately, in the work of the Organization, we cannot call a time out to overhaul our working methods and then start anew on an entirely revamped way of working. Moreover, unlike the case of a business enterprise, where the power to make decisions resides in the top man or a few top executives, the power to make decisions in the General Assembly resides with its 191 sovereign Member States — a situation that is not always conducive to the taking of quick decisions. Since we cannot tear down the Assembly and rebuild it from scratch, we can renovate it room by room, consulting and trying to achieve an agreement among its 191 co-owners, even as we continue with our work. That is the only realistic way to proceed with revitalization of the General Assembly and, for that matter, with any other aspect of United Nations reform.

Too often, we hear the complaint that the locus of power and decision-making has shifted in the past 10 to 15 years from the Assembly to the Security Council. In that regard, it might be useful to recall that, unlike the case of the League of Nations, the architects of the United Nations deliberately set out to differentiate the functions of the Assembly from those of the Security Council. As the chairman of the responsible committee at the San Francisco Conference asserted in 1945:

> "The strength of the future world Organization rests on perfect equilibrium between the functions of the Assembly and those of the Security Council. Neither of these two bodies should try to dominate the other nor trespass on the other's peculiar sphere of activities and responsibilities ... The Assembly, as the supreme

> representative body of the world, is to establish the principles on which world peace and the ideal of solidarity must rest; and, on the other hand, the Security Council is to act in accordance with those principles and with the speed necessary to prevent any attempted breach of international peace and security. In other words, the former [the Assembly] is a creative body and the latter [the Security Council] an organ of action."

But, in fact, from the very inception of the United Nations, there was a breakdown of this concept of specialization, with the General Assembly encroaching on the Security Council's peculiar sphere. That was largely the result of the cold war, which often paralysed decision-making in the Security Council, resulting in almost every major political problem being transferred to and deliberated in the Assembly. Some of us might view that period — stretching from the birth of the United Nations up to the 1990s — as the glory days of the General Assembly, but that was not how things were meant to be. Hence, the end of the cold war was a rude awakening for some of us. That does not mean that the Assembly must now settle for a lesser role than that of the Council. But it does mean at least three things.

First, it is important that the Assembly and the Security Council work in tandem, not at cross-purposes. We cannot have the two co-pilots of an aircraft trying to take it in different directions. That would be disastrous for all of us. When decisions are taken by the Security Council or by the General Assembly — especially by consensus — we should look for ways to reaffirm that position in other organs of the United Nations.

Secondly, so that the General Assembly flag can fly high, the Assembly should identify niche areas or issues on which it can make a significant contribution. Of course, that is easier said than done, but there are global problems or clusters of issues such as infectious diseases, illegal migration, the environment, terrorism and human rights — just to name a few — on which the views of the entire membership could be brought to bear in shaping international opinion and positions. Here, I am confident that everyone — including the major Powers — would deem it in their interests to promote a major role for the General Assembly. The fact is that globalization has also globalized the problems of poverty, terrorism and disease, and it will be not only the poor and small countries that will suffer. If the sense of injustice and unfairness becomes too great, the problems of the Third World will become those of the First World in one way or another. So we have no choice but to work together. What better forum to use than the Assembly, where almost every country in today's world is represented?

Thirdly, I see two impediments preventing the General Assembly from moving towards dealing with niches of common concern: its bloated agenda and its culture of rituals, which place heavy demands on our time and resources without significant results.

With regard to the first impediment, I am not sure how many more inches we can trim from the Assembly's waistline. Every agenda item represents the vested interest of a Member State or group of Member States, and that includes both developed and developing countries. How much longer they remain on the Assembly's agenda will depend on whether we can ultimately achieve a satisfactory resolution of the issues and conflicts, some of which are as old as the United Nations itself. Nevertheless, I hope that, through a spirit of compromise, we can further lighten our workload.

We should also shake up the annual high-level general debate, which has settled into a two-week ritual that cannot sustain international media attention. In that regard, I would like to draw particular attention to the recommendation in resolution 58/126 that the President-elect of the General Assembly, in consultation with the incumbent President and the Secretary-General, suggest a theme or issue of global concern for Member States to comment upon during the general debate at the start of each session. If we can get our leaders to focus their speeches on the important issues of the day, we may be better able to mobilize the Assembly to serve as a court of international opinion.

In summary, we will need to constantly identify ways in which to make the Assembly the creative body that the architects of the United Nations set out to make in San Francisco in 1945. To do that, we must be audacious but realistic in our approach.

I would next like to briefly address the issue of expanding United Nations-civil society relations. The two reports prepared on this topic — the report of the Secretary-General (A/59/354) and the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons (A/58/817 and Corr.1) —

provide much food for thought. I would like to make four preliminary observations.

First, Singapore agrees in principle that the United Nations should be a forward-looking organization and that there is merit in the United Nations expanding its consultations with different constituencies, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs). We agree that certain NGOs have expertise in specific areas of our work, for example on environmental, human rights, disarmament and development issues. They have often contributed to a better understanding of complex issues and have added to the richness of our debates. However, it is also a fact that there are NGOs that do not add any real value to the work of the United Nations. Judging from past experience, it would be difficult for us to differentiate between NGOs that can add value to our deliberations and those that cannot.

Secondly, it follows that we need to ask how best to involve NGOs in our deliberations. In that regard, the proposal to accredit NGOs to the Main Committees of the General Assembly needs careful consideration. We have to bear in mind that once we embark on that course, it would be difficult to reverse the situation. As the representative of Australia pointed out in his statement earlier today, while a greater dialogue with NGOs may be of value, it should not detract from the fundamental intergovernmental character of the Assembly. Whatever we do, we must ensure that the decisions of the United Nations are made by Member States and not by NGOs.

Thirdly, I submit that, notwithstanding the financial support envisaged by the Secretary-General for NGOs from developing countries, the playing field will not necessarily be level. What guarantee is there that the trust fund will not dry up after an initial phase, and with it access for NGOs from developing countries to attend United Nations meetings? Regarding the enlargement of the Partnerships Office, the Secretary-General has pointed out that it would have modest budgetary implications. In this day and age of competing mandates and finite resources, something would have to give. Who would then decide what is to go and what will stay?

Fourthly, based on Singapore's experience, especially during our stint on the Security Council, I submit that the NGOs that matter often know whom to work with and how to get their viewpoints across. We had good working relations with a wide range of NGOs that added value to the work of the Security Council. In a way, that automatically separates the wheat from the chaff. Even as we look for ways to help NGOs gain better access to our deliberations, we should not neglect to provide similar assistance to Member States that need it in order to better participate in the work of the United Nations.

In conclusion, it is important to address some of these questions and concerns and to examine carefully the implications of the Cardoso Panel's proposals before taking any action.

Mr. Requeijo Gual (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): First, I extend to you, Sir, my delegation's satisfaction at seeing you presiding over this meeting of the General Assembly to consider two items of great importance.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Algeria on behalf of the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement. We would like to add some comments to complement that statement.

We must undertake without further delay a genuine reform of the United Nations that restores its original roots and ensures proper respect for the Charter by all Member States, large and small. The strengthening and the reform of the United Nations should have the goal of restoring the Organization's central position in the system of international relations, ensuring the rule of international law and the United Nations Charter, rebuilding the system of collective security and ensuring the development of multilateralism and cooperation among States.

Multilateralism should not be reinterpreted by some in a capricious and opportunistic manner. Rather, it should be defended by all Member States, because multilateralism depends on full respect for international law and the practice of democracy in international relations. It is becoming increasingly clear that if we want to restore the international community's confidence in the United Nations and, in particular, to restore the Organization's credibility before international public opinion, we must ensure that the Organization truly acts in the collective interest of its Member States.

United Nations reform should be general and comprehensive. It should encompass and democratize

all the principal and subsidiary organs. The main pillar of reform should be the preservation of the universal, democratic and intergovernmental character of the Organization. In that context, it is necessary to respect the functions and the prerogatives that the Charter entrusts respectively to the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council for the purposes stated in the Charter. Interference by the Security Council in the areas of competence of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council should come to an end. Now more than ever, the Security Council requires thorough reform, including its urgent democratization.

As well, the political issues of the Organization, including the issue of reform itself, should not be subordinated to management and administrative concepts.

Likewise, we should not subordinate the political issues of the Organization, including this very exercise, to their managerial and administrative aspects. The implementation of a transnational corporation approach with a narrow cost-benefit criterion contradicts the very nature of the Organization, given its universal and democratic character, its political essence and intergovernmental aspect.

In this regard, Sir, I wish briefly to refer to the report of the Secretary-General submitted in response to the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations under the item "Strengthening of the United Nations system".

This document should be carefully examined by Member States, since the initiatives set forth in it could have enormous impact on the intergovernmental nature of the United Nations, as well as on the original mandates of the system's funds, agencies and programmes. Although some proposals found in the text could have a positive effect on the work of the Organization, for instance that of urging other agencies, such as the Bretton Woods institutions, to promote greater participation of civil society in their activities, other proposals have to do with budgets, concepts and methodologies that are very far from enjoying intergovernmental consensus.

This is the reason why the implementation of any of the initiatives outlined in the report of the Secretary General will require a clear legislative mandate by Member States.

The revitalization of the General Assembly also constitutes a determining element within the real reform of the United Nations. We cannot speak of an Organization able to act more democratically and effectively, as long as the General Assembly does not fully exercise the powers entrusted to it by the Charter. Those include the powers that necessarily should derive from the Charter in the event of a stalemate where the Security Council fails to reject the use of force for political ends, and where it does not insist on the peaceful resolution of conflicts and the elimination of double standards in order to achieve security, stability, justice and democracy in the world.

Resolutions 58/126 and 58/316, adopted during the previous session of the General Assembly under the leadership of President Julian Hunte, add to the legislative arsenal needed for the revitalization of this main body. Hence, all the relevant resolutions that have already been adopted continue to be mandatory points of reference.

The revitalization process should have as its final goal the reaffirmation of the central role of the General Assembly as the main body for deliberation and the adoption of policies, and for representation within the United Nations, as acknowledged in the Millennium Declaration.

Thus, this Assembly should maintain its independent nature and role in this process as a forum for wide-ranging debate, where Member States are not restricted or limited when referring to the issues that are of interest to them. The executive capacity of the General Assembly should not be weakened either.

This is why, in our opinion, during the current session and under your leadership, Mr. President, we feel that we should give priority to the component of revitalization aimed at consolidating the authority of this Assembly. Resolution 58/126 itself includes, in section "A" of its annex, measures whose full and urgent implementation would allow such consolidation.

At the same time, actions aimed at improving the working methods of the Assembly should not erode, but rather complement, efforts to restore its basic role. We should take this into account when implementing relevant resolutions, including resolutions 58/126 and 58/316. We should also remember that no improvement in structure or function can compensate for the lack of political will of powerful States or the pernicious tendency towards unilateralism.

The United Nations agenda is in itself a political matter and the issues currently covered just at the plenary level have essential importance and sensitivity for most Member States. Thus, the rationalization of the choice of agenda items should not be based upon administrative or financial considerations. It must be a patient and democratic process of seeking consensus, which implies respect for the opinion of all Member States, especially of those most concerned and without whose approval no proposal for reorganization or improvement on a given item should be made at all.

The right of States to propose, in accordance with the rules of procedure and the Charter of the United Nations, the inclusion of new items in the agenda of the General Assembly, as well as their consideration in the necessary way and at the appropriate time, should not be affected either.

In quite a few cases, the continued existence of certain agenda items is mainly due to the fact that the relevant resolutions have not been implemented. Furthermore, it is worth remembering that the General Assembly is not the only main body with numerous agenda items. In fact, we have witnessed how the Security Council increases the number of agenda items it covers each year.

We also recall that the so-called conceptualization of the agenda, which has already been instituted, must not prejudge or influence the way the work of the General Assembly is organized or undertaken.

Likewise, efforts to revitalize the work of the Assembly's General Committee should be framed within the prerogatives assigned to it, pursuant to the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly.

Actions aimed at revitalizing specifically the work of the Main Committees should comply with the general guidelines established at the plenary level, after a comprehensive consultation process among Member States.

In this regard, the recommendations to improve the working methods of the Main Committees, including recommendations for streamlining their respective working programmes, should also be based on comprehensive consultations and consensus. Such a process should be undertaken without detriment to current priorities and without neglecting traditional substantive issues.

We consider that the interpretation and implementation of resolutions 58/126 and 58/316 should not, by any means, limit the activity or impose conditions on the political debate or the ability of Member States to present initiatives within the Main Committees. Nor should we underestimate the value of the viewpoints of the smallest delegations, which are often unable to participate actively in all the segments, interactive debates and other meetings that may be scheduled in such subsidiary organs of the Assembly.

Likewise, we must not forget that the new initiatives of Assembly presidents and bureaux could set precedents for all the Main Committees and even for the plenary of the Assembly itself. Therefore, the presentation of such organizational initiatives should be an extremely careful exercise because of the implications that might be involved, including possible incongruities and contradictions with the very rules of procedure of the General Assembly. In our opinion, the so-called gradual implementation of new organizational measures in the Committees should not take place until there is a clear, negotiated governmental mandate on that issue.

Let us not deceive ourselves: the effectiveness of the work of the plenary and of the Committees will depend more on the political will of Member States than on changes in the working methods of the plenary and the Committees. In any case, they should not affect the mandates and priorities established in the Millennium Development Goals, the outcomes of the special sessions of the Assembly and of United Nations conferences and summits or the priorities contained in the medium-term plan.

In our opinion, the main problem currently lies in the lack of implementation of the many resolutions that the General Assembly has adopted, which constitute an important normative body but remain inert because their implementation depends on the political will of those States that have the political, military or economic power to do so. It seems normal, then, that that also happens with the many resolutions on United Nations reform, whose level of implementation is limited. However, with total realism, the General Assembly can set for itself the task of debating crucial and urgent international issues in order to adopt concrete, action-oriented resolutions.

Finally, my delegation reiterates that reform cannot be a merely bureaucratic process of adapting

what is left of the United Nations to the interests and whims of a few rich and powerful countries. Likewise, we hope that, as a result of this process, the interaction between the Secretariat and the General Assembly will be strengthened so that the former may respond more effectively to the mandates determined by Member States.

I conclude my statement, Mr. President, by wishing you every success in your work and reiterating that, in this complex but necessary process of reforming the Organization, you can count on the full availability and constructive participation of the delegation of Cuba.

Mr. Balestra (San Marino): As this is the first time that I am taking the floor at the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, I wish to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election and reaffirm to you the full support of my country and my delegation.

San Marino has always considered the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly to be an imperative. The General Assembly, as the main organ of the United Nations, should remain the main forum for the international community to discuss relevant political issues. The international system has already established a wide range of technical and political organs to discuss issues that need expert attention.

The General Assembly's composition and the role it plays make it a unique organ of the United Nations. Those characteristics are the basis of its particular legitimacy, enabling it, on many issues in international politics, to obtain a global consensus that might hardly be attainable in other forums. The first objective of an organ with the characteristics of the General Assembly must be to make States feel that they are part of a global community, at least on major issues. To accomplish that function, the General Assembly should cooperate more frequently and constructively with other international actors, such as non-governmental organizations.

For that reason, my country welcomes the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations (A/58/817 and Corr.1) and thanks the Deputy Secretary-General for her presentation of the report of the Secretary-General (A/59/354) in response to it. Civil society and other stakeholders should be given more opportunities to express their views. Their comments and suggestions would represent an essential contribution to the Assembly's work.

San Marino believes that the General Assembly should develop its mandate effectively through the streamlining of the agenda and the limitation of the number of items in order to consider them in a deeper and more reflective manner. Limiting the number of issues does not mean to deprive the General Assembly of its power. On the contrary, it would all the Assembly to focus on its priorities as stated in the Millennium Declaration.

The Main Committees themselves would benefit from such a reduction, giving them the opportunity to concentrate on specific issues and adopt more incisive resolutions.

My delegation welcomes resolution 58/316. We are in favour of a great number of the points contained in it: in particular that of normally holding the meetings of the plenary session on Mondays and Thursdays; organizing the agenda under headings corresponding to the priorities of the Organization in order to give a sense of structure to the work of the Assembly; biennializing and triennializing the agenda items; rationalizing the work of the Main Committees and reducing the volume of documentation submitted by the Secretariat.

Nevertheless, we believe that the resolutions adopted to date represent merely a first step in the revitalization process. In our opinion, the General Committee should be strengthened in such a way as to become an effective means of facilitating the work of the Assembly. It should play an important role in determining how to reduce the number of agenda items, suggest alternative ways to discuss them and, in particular, be used as an instrument for involving all delegations in informal negotiations.

We also believe that the implementation of resolutions should become even more important than their adoption. We deem it vital to create a system by which the General Assembly is informed of the degree of implementation and impact of its resolutions. With such a system, we might be able to avoid adopting the same resolutions over and over again.

Mr. Sharma (India): We are pleased to participate in this joint debate on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly and the strengthening of the United Nations system. We thank

the Secretary-General for the detailed documentation presented under the two agenda items. We express our appreciation for the introductory statement made by the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Louise Fréchette.

The position of the Non-Aligned Movement has already been outlined by Algeria. We would like to focus on some of the broader issues surrounding the two agenda items.

My delegation congratulates you, Mr. President, on the commitment that you bring to the process of the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly and the strengthening of the United Nations system. We would like to place on record our appreciation for the positive strides made on those issues under the leadership of the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session. We will work constructively with you, Mr. President, and we wish you every success in your endeavours in that regard.

The process of reform and revitalization is necessarily a slow and measured one; we cannot expect results overnight. We need patience and perseverance in our efforts to build agreement among all Member States on issues that often involve sensitive political questions. The strong, steady and purposeful forward movement of a ship perhaps characterizes the approach that we need to adopt in this process.

We made considerable progress in the previous session, which involved several rounds of consultations and informal discussions. Progress was made in categorizing items under broad headings, in streamlining to some extent the work of the Main Committees of the General Assembly and in the biennialization, triennialization, clustering and elimination of items of the agenda of the General Assembly. Resolutions 58/126 and 58/316, adopted by the General Assembly in December 2003 and July 2004, respectively, contain some important steps forward.

We recognize, however, that those steps are essentially the first steps. The ultimate objective of the reform process is to enhance the effectiveness of the Organization in its responsiveness to the needs of Member States, especially developing countries. The progress in attempts to reform and revitalize the United Nations system will be judged by its adaptation to the efforts of developing countries to achieve the targets set out in the Millennium Development Goals. Simultaneously, the reform process will be judged by the effectiveness of the response of the United Nations to the global challenges posed by the threats of international terrorism; weapons of mass destruction, including the question of nuclear proliferation and disarmament; and transnational organized crime, involving the trafficking in narcotics, weapons and human persons.

We have a long way ahead of us in reaching our objective. We hope that the High-Level Panel set up by the Secretary-General to report on the threats and challenges faced by the United Nations and the changes necessary in its institutions and processes, will produce recommendations that we are able to implement. We hope that the intergovernmental consideration of the recommendations of the Secretary-General on the Panel's report will give us the opportunity to view the process in a holistic manner, thereby enabling us to make reforms in various parts of the United Nations system. In the long term, the reforms will be enduring if the different elements of the processes move in the same direction.

The reform process that we are attempting to establish must eventually enhance the prestige, authority and effectiveness of the General Assembly and its ability to deliberate on and review policy. That will have to be done in practice, through concrete action. As an important first step, the restoration of the prestige and effectiveness of the General Assembly could be brought about by returning the thematic debates currently being held in the Security Council to the General Assembly, where they rightly belong. Members of the Security Council belonging to the Group of 77 or sympathetic to the views of the vast majority of the developing countries concerning the primacy of the General Assembly have a major role to play in that respect. The terms of interaction between the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council operate without difficulties. But consideration would have to be given to the occasional anomalies that arise in the relationship between the General Assembly and the Security Council. The Office of the President of the General Assembly has, over the last year, been strengthened with additional manpower, and it would be useful to review the contribution that has been made to the working of that Office. Similarly, an evaluation of the functioning of the General Assembly following the many innovative changes brought about since the beginning of this session would be a useful

exercise and would help us choose the direction for the future.

The volume of paper in the United Nations has been notorious indeed. Those who have come to cope with the enormous quantities of documents and resolutions, with only a few people at their disposal in their missions, can best testify to the strangulating effect that the paperwork can impose. Even larger missions find it difficult to keep abreast of the documentation. The documents are crisper now, but the Secretariat needs to continue focusing on making documentation more manageable and user-friendly.

Rationalization and simplification of the language used in the resolutions would also be useful. Rationalization of the language or of the number of resolutions will, of course, be possible only with the cooperation of Member States.

It is important in the process of reform not to overlook the rules of procedure already adopted and available to us. The strict observance of the rules of procedure should not be compromised in the revitalization process. It is also essential to remember the intergovernmental character of the Organization. Interactions with civil society or other outside bodies undertaken for making the proceedings more broad-based should be done only within the framework of assisting the intergovernmental deliberations and with the objective of increasing the quality of intergovernmental decision-making.

We thank the Secretary-General for his report in response to the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations (A/59/354). As the report of the Secretary-General has become available only very recently, my delegation has not had sufficient time to reflect on the proposals made by the Secretary-General. We would, therefore, wish to express our preliminary views on the subject.

Our consideration of the recommendations of the Cardoso Panel and the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Panel is complicated by ambiguity on the definition of civil society, in the report. The definition used by the Panel is at some variance with the elements of civil society identified earlier by the Secretary-General and with what has come to be commonly understood by the term.

We do not believe that parliamentarians form a part of civil society; nevertheless, the proposal to engage parliamentarians in a more intensive manner in the work of the United Nations is welcome. Their sustained interaction and association with issues of global significance can only help in improving legislation and implementation of policies within their own countries. The idea of local authorities being a part of civil society is incongruous by any standard. While local authorities are a key element in implementation, they can hardly be identified as civil society.

The proposal to establish a trust fund to increase the participation of representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from developing countries has considerable merit and deserves further consideration. The sustained efforts of the United Nations system have resulted in significant increases in the number of participating NGOs from developing countries in recent years. The situation still needs further improvement. The creation of a trust fund will be a positive contribution to the process. However, clear criteria in establishing the trust fund, particularly with regard to donations that are unconditional in nature, will be important for its success.

We wish to address in greater detail two important issues discussed in the report. The first is the participation of non-governmental organizations in the work of the General Assembly. Although the Secretary-General states that "There is considerable merit in opening the regular work of the Assembly to increased participation by accredited NGOs" (*A/59/354, para. 25*), a convincing case has not been made for that. The nature of the participation and the benefits to be derived from it are not apparent, and we are not persuaded that it would benefit the United Nations or its Member States. It would also militate against both the intergovernmental principle and the principle of democratic representation, since civil-society NGOs, in strict meaning of the term, have not been elected.

Further, the interpretation that there is nothing in Article 71 of the United Nations Charter that would preclude the General Assembly from inviting non-governmental organizations to participate in its sessions is a disingenuous legal interpretation, which seems to be part of a growing trend.

In our view, the provisions of the Charter and its Article 71 are very clear. The Charter, through Article 71, determines that the principal relationship between

the United Nations and civil society will be through the Economic and Social Council. We would be hesitant to tamper with the Charter of the United Nations and would caution against its fallacious interpretation for the sake of convenience or expediency.

The second issue which merits comment is the granting of accreditation to non-governmental organizations. The Secretary-General suggests that the General Committee of the General Assembly could be designated for the accreditation process for applications for consultative status. In our understanding, that would only be applicable if non-governmental organizations were to participate in the work of the General Assembly.

The Secretary-General refers to the comments of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations concerning the work of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations. The comments of the Panel are somewhat disappointing in regard to the work of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations. The question has been dealt with at a superficial level. There was a lack of adequate consultations with members of the Committee, resulting in a lack of understanding of the work of the Committee, and with the wider community of Member States on the usefulness of the Committee's work. That is indeed regrettable as the opportunity to make meaningful proposals to reform and streamline the work of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations for further improving the accreditation process of non-governmental organizations has been lost.

Several proposals are discussed in the Secretary-General's report with regard to country-level engagement with non-governmental organizations. Due diligence must be exercised to ensure that the mandates of the various United Nations bodies are not exceeded. Nor should we lose sight of the fact that Governments are the main interlocutors of the United Nations system at the country level.

We shall provide more details of our views on the reports of the Secretary-General and the Cardoso Panel during further discussions.

Mr. Chidyausiku (Zimbabwe): I take the floor to address the Report of the Secretary-General in response to the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations (A/59/354) under agenda item 54, entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations system". Allow me to commend the Secretary-General for the report before us, and to thank the Deputy Secretary-General for introducing it.

With regard to agenda item 52, my delegation fully subscribes to the statement made by Algeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, of which we are a member.

At the outset, let me indicate that my delegation agrees with the Secretary-General when he stresses that "The United Nations is and will remain an intergovernmental organization at which decisions are taken by its Member States" (*A/59/354, para. 3*).

At the United Nations, Governments represent their constituencies, which include civil society, and we are mandated by them to take decisions on their behalf. The ongoing debate about enhancing the role of civil society in the work of the United Nations unfortunately suggests that national Governments are not representative enough and that civil society takes up the unfulfilled part of the mandate. Assuming that any gaps in representation exist, what needs to be done is to strengthen consultations at the national level. Whatever measures are taken in the ongoing process of the modernization and the institutional change of the United Nations should therefore ensure that its essential character as an intergovernmental organization is maintained.

Regrettably, over the years, there has been a growing and determined tendency to undermine that position. We have witnessed numerous attempts to change or seek ways to circumvent the established rules of procedure of the Assembly and of other intergovernmental processes in favour of civil society, even before the need to do so has been established. In some cases, progress in deliberative processes had been threatened, as some delegations and groups have insisted on a kind of inclusiveness that had not been previously agreed upon. It is our hope that this debate will clarify the intergovernmental nature of the United Nations.

In the past, non-governmental and other civil society organizations have participated in the work of the General Assembly in a variety of ways, such as during special sessions, round-table meetings and preparatory processes for international conferences. However, the practice has been that they do not participate in plenary meetings of the Assembly. We

have not been provided with any compelling reasons why that practice should change.

The report recognizes that civil society organizations in different parts of the world are at different levels of development and that something needs to be done to bridge the gap. In this regard, we welcome the intention of the Secretary-General to create a trust fund to facilitate the participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from developing countries in intergovernmental meetings, in the hope that that would make a difference. According to the report, 70 per cent of NGOs having consultative status with the Economic and Social Council come from developed countries, while the remaining 30 per cent have their headquarters in developing countries. Under those circumstances, the calls to increase NGO participation in intergovernmental processes unfortunately translate into demands for an increase in the voice of the developed world. Evidently, this issue needs to be properly thought through, as it has ramifications for the issue of democracy in international governance.

On the question of accreditation, the Secretary-General has acknowledged the work done by the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations to improve its efficiency, including through the introduction of a paperless committee. We therefore find the reasons put forward for disbanding the Committee unconvincing. In addition to granting certain defined rights to approved organizations, the Committee is an indispensable tool that serves to ensure that those organizations recognize their responsibilities and are held accountable for their actions. We also wish to observe that the whole process of accreditation, including the so-called pre-screening of applications, must remain the responsibility of Member States.

The report speaks of the need to enhance country-level engagement with NGOs and to enhance the capacity of NGOs at the same level. There is merit in that proposal, particularly with regard to the capacity of NGOs in developing countries. However, it should be made clear that such engagement and capacity-building should be done only with the full involvement and participation of the national Governments concerned. Care should be taken to ensure that the United Nations is not seen to be engaging in practices and activities that amount to interference in the internal affairs of Member States.

Regarding the engagement of parliamentarians in the work of the United Nations, my delegation is supportive of the proposal for support meetings before important intergovernmental meetings and of holding such meetings at the national, regional and international levels. The outcomes of such meetings would indeed enrich the deliberative processes at the intergovernmental level.

Let me conclude by observing that this report appears to have been informed only by the need to justify and institutionalize greater civil society involvement in the work of the United Nations and not by the need to improve the basis upon which the relationship is formed. We note that the report is silent about the concerns of Governments regarding this issue. Questions have been raised about the growing numbers, motives, representativeness, integrity and accountability of civil society organizations in the United Nations. The report ignores those serious issues, preferring only to discuss increasing civil society participation. We hope that those issues will be addressed before, and not after, discussion of the modalities for enhancing civil society involvement.

Mr. Herasymenko (Ukraine): First of all, let me warmly congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. You may rest assured of Ukraine's full support of your efforts to make the activities of the General Assembly during the current session successful and effective.

The fact that we taking up the discussion of agenda item 52, "Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly", and agenda item 54, "Strengthening of the United Nations system", at the very beginning of the fifty-ninth session, immediately after the general debate, testifies to the importance of those items for the international community. It is encouraging to acknowledge that we have achieved considerable success in our work on these issues in the past two years.

I would like to commend the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session, Mr. Julian Hunte, and the six facilitators, whose tireless efforts helped us to achieve progress on the reform and the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. That progress reaffirms our joint commitment to the central position of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative organ of

the United Nations and reaffirms our desire to enable it to play that role effectively.

That should be the ultimate goal and major direction of the ongoing process of the revitalization of the General Assembly. Although many of us would like to see bolder steps to give new breath to the Assembly, in the current circumstances we consider it appropriate to focus our efforts on those proposals that could gain the wide support of the United Nations membership and that can be realistically expected to be implemented in the near future.

Ukraine welcomed the General Assembly's adoption of resolutions 58/126 and 58/316, which were important steps forward. They set out a number of practical proposals aimed at enhancing the authority and the role of the General Assembly and improving its working methods. Their important feature — establishing defined time frames — has greatly contributed to the implementation of many of their provisions and laid down the framework for further consideration of others, including during this session of the Assembly.

We are pleased to see that those resolutions are already at work. Let me just mention the new organization of agenda items under headings that correspond to the priorities of the work of the United Nations. A number of items have been streamlined, and that effort should continue, in consultation with Member States and under agreed principles. Among other things, we believe it is also necessary to streamline the routine speeches delivered in this Hall.

Ukraine fully supports the decision to strengthen the Office of the President. It goes without saying that regular consultations of the President of the General Assembly with the Presidents of the Security Council and Economic and Social Council, as well as with representatives of regional and other groups, would be very helpful to better plan and organize the work of the General Assembly. In that regard, we would also like to stress that it would be useful for the current President of the General Assembly to maintain close and regular contacts with the Council of Presidents of the General Assembly, so that he can take full advantage of its members' experience and advice. We hope that that idea will receive positive consideration in the course of further discussions during this session.

We should not lose the momentum of reform. To a large extent our hopes in that regard rely on your leadership, Mr. President, and you may count on the full support and understanding of my delegation in your efforts to achieve tangible results. I would like to assure you that Ukraine, whose representative is chairing the Third Committee, is fully committed to translating the decisions on this issue into practice.

Regarding agenda item 54, "Strengthening of the United Nations system", the Secretary-General in his latest report on the work of the Organization (A/59/1), said: "The implementation of my agenda for further change, submitted to the General Assembly two years ago, is now largely complete" (para. 255). He further reports that the recent review conducted by the General Accountability Office of the United States Government estimated that 85 per cent of the reforms proposed in the 1997 and 2002 reform packages had been either fully or partly implemented. Those statistics are quite clear. I wish to express our gratitude to Secretary-General Kofi Annan, whose tireless efforts in promoting the reforms in the United Nations since assuming the office deserve not only our words of praise, but, first and foremost, our active support. That support will be necessary in order to achieve progress in implementing the remaining reform measures during the current session.

In that regard, I would like to welcome the submission of the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations (A/58/817 and Corr.1), chaired by the former President of Brazil, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, as well as the Secretary-General's report in response to the Panel's recommendations (A/59/354). Indeed, the effectiveness and relevance of the Organization can only increase if we find appropriate ways to strengthen the involvement and participation of civil society in it.

Finally, I would like to underline that, along with the revitalization of the General Assembly and strengthening of the United Nations in many areas, we need to push forward with Security Council reform. Advancing the reform of the Economic and Social Council, through strengthening its coordinating role in the economic and social spheres, also should not be put on the backburner of our agenda. We are looking forward to the outcome of the work of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change and will actively engage in its consideration.

Mr. Gallegos Chiriboga (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to extend to you, Mr. President,

the congratulations of my delegation. We are sure that under your able leadership during this session the General Assembly will have a successful outcome. I would also like to assure you that Ecuador is prepared to cooperate with you and to make a constructive contribution on the matters of greatest priority for the United Nations. One of those matters is the subject we are dealing with today. We know of your ability and we have no doubt, therefore, that the results of your stewardship will be extremely positive for the Organization.

My delegation associates itself with what was said by the representative of Algeria, speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, and also what was said by the representative of Brazil on behalf of the Rio Group.

We reaffirm our conviction of the need for the General Assembly to reassume the importance and the role for which it was created. As the most important democratic deliberative body on the planet — where each Member State has a voice and a vote — it is imperative to give it the necessary capability to lead the international community. Clearly, since its creation more than half a century ago, there have been historic changes that have made it necessary — and I would even say vital — for the General Assembly to reform its procedures and efficiency so that it can confront the challenges of a changing international situation.

In the absence of political decisions by Members in the General Assembly, other organs have had to play an increasingly important role. That absence of political will has been seen in the lack of decision-making ability and an immense agenda — often loaded down with repetitive and irrelevant items. All of this means that the General Assembly is not taking up the historic challenge of reflecting a dynamic international policy for today. Often, that incapacity has meant that subjects that could have been dealt with in this forum have not been. Member States need to realize that the General Assembly is a debate and reconciliation mechanism devised for the benefit of our peoples. The international community, therefore, requires us to bring about a substantive revitalization of a system that is failing it.

The approval, at the previous session, of resolution 58/316 constitutes the result of very difficult negotiations and it encourages us to continue working with steadfast responsibility to implement its mandate.

We are grateful for the achievements of the former President of the General Assembly, Julian Hunte, on this issue. We realize, however, that a lot more remains to be done. During this session, Members need to examine the question of reprogramming of the work of the Main Committees of the General Assembly. By April 2005 the Main Committees are to present to the General Assembly for its consideration their analysis on the need, frequency and importance of each of the subjects they are considering. Those recommendations from those specialists will be of fundamental importance in helping us to rationalize the workload, which itself needs to be reviewed with greater attention.

Resolution 58/316 only removed two subjects from the workload, subjects that do not even amount to 1 per cent of the total. That is of concern. We recognize that this is a sensitive subject for many delegations; however, it is also true that the programme of work of the General Assembly should be a true reflection of the current state of relations among States in the international community.

We also hope that the changes introduced with regard to the Bureau will serve to strengthen the progress of work in the General Assembly.

I would like to conclude by reflecting on the importance of the deliberations of the General Assembly with regard to the work of the High-level Panel, convened by the Secretary-General to examine threats, challenges and change. A report from that Panel will be submitted for consideration by Member States in December and undoubtedly will propose a fundamental revision of the architecture of international relations. The General Assembly will have to study that report and take decisions to confront the challenges before the United Nations, to which I referred previously. The relevance of the United Nations, which has been questioned so much in recent days, will be in the hands of the representatives gathered together here. We must remember that international society will be taking a very close look at the deliberations taking place in this Hall.

Mr. Belinga-Eboutou (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): In taking the floor for the first time here at the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, Mr. President, I would like to express to you our great pleasure and pride at seeing you preside over our work. Your outstanding qualities of statesmanship, your many

years of experience as a diplomat and your superb understanding of people guarantee the value of your presidency's contribution to the work of the Assembly. We are pleased that, under your guidance, the General Assembly is today continuing the debate begun at its forty-sixth session on its revitalization and the strengthening of its authority. Cameroon associates itself with the statement made by Algeria this morning on behalf on the Non-Aligned Movement.

The debate begun this morning is an important exercise because it deals with the functioning of an essential body that is in fact the cornerstone of multilateralism. Indeed, the General Assembly, for some, is a forum in which to harmonize the efforts of States to implement the principles and purposes of the United Nations. For others, it is a body that expresses the collective and universal conscience. For yet others, it is a body endowed with a kind of moral authority, manifested through abilities that are as extensive as they are diverse.

After more than a decade of slow and patient negotiating, we have now made some progress. The most significant step was the adoption at the fifty-eighth session of resolutions 58/126 and 58/316. Allow me here to pay heartfelt tribute to your predecessor, Julian Hunte, who, through his flexibility, tenacity and courage, as well as his wisdom, made that adoption possible. In so doing, he made a valuable contribution to the success of the mission that our heads of State entrusted to us at the Millennium Summit — that of reforming our Organization and improving its effectiveness in meeting the great concerns of the United Nations family.

The resolutions adopted last year will indeed be considered landmarks in our quest for an Assembly with enhanced authority, a greater role to play, and better working methods, both within its Bureau and in the main Committees. The decisions taken on the agenda, as well as those relating to the Economic and Social Council, are ample testimony to this fact. In fact, the agenda, which expresses the concerns of the Millennium Summit, will now be organized around the Organization's priorities for the period of 2002 to 2005, and those priorities dovetail with the initial goals of the founders of the United Nations.

This categorization and restructuring, we believe, has numerous advantages. Let us take note here of two of these advantages. The first advantage is that the agenda is thus further rationalized and, we believe, will help us to better cope with the numerous old and new challenges facing us. The second advantage is that this new structure imposes much more consistency and cohesion in how we deal with the questions before the General Assembly. Indeed, the Main Committees will no longer have to deal with the items sent to them as independent questions — or as questions per se — but rather will be able to examine them in the context of our Organization's responsibility to provide answers to the major concerns facing mankind.

Under the resolutions adopted last year, the report of the Economic and Social Council and those of the other principal bodies will be considered in their entirety at the plenary. My country welcomes this, since it in fact entails a reaffirmation of the practice begun by the General Assembly in 2001 when Cameroon was presiding over the Economic and Social Council. That decision is particularly important now, as the General Assembly's authority continues to shrink the more its services are in demand, as a result of the extremely subtle interference of other bodies with restricted membership. The Member States, to ensure that this decision is fully effective, must see to it that this review is no longer merely an opportunity for a string of general statements but, rather, produces recommendations that will provide fuel for thought for the later work of the Council or be useful to the Bureau for purposes of follow-up. That consideration must involve — and this is not yet the case — a very high number of States. These remarks, though intended for the consideration of the report of Economic and Social Council, are also valid for the General Assembly's consideration, under article XV of the Charter, of the reports of other principal United Nations organs, including those of the Secretary-General, as head of the Secretariat, and the Security Council. We will have an opportunity in due time to return to that issue when we consider those reports.

This concept of debate naturally assumes that the Bureau will provide stronger leadership. This is why we wish to see a continuation of consultations regarding its enhancement. Along the same lines, consultations should continue on proposals aimed at developing a new schedule for the work of the General Assembly for two substantive periods. This means, Mr. President, that your universally recognized qualities will be, in the days and months to come, most valuable for us in finding solutions to all these issues,

as well as to pending issues. Here, more than ever before, I believe, you will need boldness and wisdom. As Horace said, *sapere aude*: dare to be wise. You can count on the continuing support of my delegation.

The various proposals before us, including those in the document introduced this morning by the Deputy Secretary-General, will also be of valuable assistance to you. Moreover, I would like to express here to the Deputy Secretary-General our great appreciation for her introductory statement, which was most enlightening.

I would now like to make a few general comments on the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations. This is indeed the proper place to congratulate this Panel, presided over by Mr. Fernando Henrique Cardoso, for the high quality of the recommendations contained in his most useful report. Two years ago, the Secretary-General, in his report entitled "Strengthening the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387), rightly referred to the growing importance of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as players in international society. He also emphasized the interest that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) increasingly have in the work of the United Nations and warmly welcomed their high-quality participation in devising solutions to the challenges facing the international community.

I would like to recall here the role of NGOs in the establishment of the International Criminal Court, as well as their contributions to the success of major world conferences on the financing of development and on sustainable development. We had the opportunity to appreciate the relevance of their comments during the debates on poverty, investment, debt and economic growth.

It was natural and timely, therefore, to rationalize and strengthen the synergistic relationship between the United Nations system and the NGOs. Here, we are pleased to note that through the recent well-balanced review of existing practices, as well as the clear presentation of recommendations on the best way to promote that relationship, the Panel has brilliantly discharged the mission entrusted to it.

We believe, as does the Secretary-General, that in-depth consultations between the United Nations and NGOs, and the growing participation of NGOs in debates of global importance, can only serve to improve the quality of policy analysis. Partnership with NGOs will considerably facilitate the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, particularly in the humanitarian areas, in combating poverty and in education — in a nutshell, in providing access for all to basic social services.

It is in this spirit that the Secretary-General in his report two years ago (A/57/1) emphasized the critical importance of such cooperation with the NGOs, given the need to respond to the complex social, economic, security and environmental challenges that exist today.

Overall, it is encouraging to note that such cooperation has continued to develop, witness the increased level of participation of NGOs in the deliberations and activities of the United Nations system.

In our view, some of the proposals for enhancing NGO participation, in terms of both quantity and quality, merit attention. This is particularly true with regard to the need to make significant resources available to facilitate the participation of NGOs from developing countries. Those NGOs require somewhat more time to become genuinely independent and responsible players.

That is why Cameroon, while presiding over the Economic and Social Council, supported the implementation of the initiative of the United Nations Secretary-General for establishing a network of African NGOs with the objective of helping them to strengthen their capacities.

Other proposals, such as those regarding the accreditation of NGOs and their contribution and participation at the national level, have moved a little further forward as well.

Those are a few general comments that come to mind on a reading of the Cardoso report. We thank the Secretary-General for having given us some indication of how he intends to follow-up on those recommendations. We would also like to thank him for presenting States with ideas on policy-oriented action and decisions based on the report's recommendations. We think that we should continue to study this subject on the basis of this outstanding document and, clearly, our consultations in the days to come will be inspired by its conclusions. The report's very title attests to the faith that the world's peoples have in our Organization and their readiness to participate side by side with

States so that the United Nations will best and most effectively be able to meet the legitimate aspirations of mankind — a world free from fear and want.

Mrs. Holguín Cuéllar (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your appointment and assure you of the willingness of our delegation to help you in the work of the Assembly. We would like to repeat our support for the goal of strengthening the United Nations and we will actively participate in this debate in affirmation of its role in the multilateral system.

We would like to thank the Secretary-General for the presentation of his report on the relationship between the United Nations and civil society. We believe that working with civil society is important and should continue. We welcome the multifaceted interchange that is possible within the multilateral system. The main players in this relationship, however, are Member States, who are the creators of this Organization.

We wish to respect the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations — that which gives this Organization its raison d'être. The United Nations, lets not forget, was created to bring together and strengthen States with the objective of peaceful coexistence and social and economic development. The dialogue with civil society is constructive because it strengthens the institutions of Member States; and the presence of stable States that are respectful of international law reinforces the multilateral system. Therefore, the dialogue should be transparent and we should actively involve States and non-governmental organizations.

In this respect, we do not agree with the idea presented in the report aimed at eliminating the current intergovernmental accreditation body for non-governmental organizations. The conclusions of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations reveal the coordinated and efficient work carried out by Member States. The current accreditation system is open to States and NGOs. A Secretariat-based system would not have such transparency and openness and would not be as open to Member States and NGOs from developing countries. We feel that transparency in the process of accreditation is fundamental, and that only a system managed by an intergovernmental body can guarantee this. We feel that any change in the current accreditation system and its scope should be the result of consultation and debate among Member States.

Although we feel that we should take a closer look at the proposal to connect the local and global levels, it is important to reiterate that the sovereignty of States, as laid down in the Charter of the United Nations, is alive and well today. Any effort to act on the proposal must take into account the structures of Member States, which are the main connectors between the local and the global. This Organization belongs to the Member States and its agenda should be determined through debate among Member States.

The exchange between NGOs and the United Nations has gone on for many years. That exchange must complement the support function of the United Nations and the NGOs in helping Member States in their development. However, we feel that the main players in the United Nations system are Governments, and that should continue to be the case. We feel that States should continue to be fully engaged in their relationships with NGOs, and therefore we do not see the need to expand bureaucratic structures within the Secretariat for that purpose. We reiterate our availability to actively participate in the debate on the inclusion of NGOs in our work.

Mr. Sermoneta (Israel): Israel remains staunchly in favour of the ideas that lie behind these continuing ventures. Efficacy demands efficiency. In seeking to revitalize the work of the General Assembly, we will also strengthen the United Nations system; in turn, in seeking to strengthen the United Nations system, we cannot but revitalize the work of the General Assembly.

To work towards realizing our goals in such important areas as technology-based development issues, water issues, the promotion of good governance as the foundation for peace, and the strengthening of the United Nations capacity to fight terrorism, we must streamline our energies and avoid the practice of harping on the skewed obsession of a repetitive agenda.

In recent years, there have been some signs of improvement in that regard, in line with the Secretary-General's reports and the visions often enunciated by this Assembly. The number of joint debates is expanding — in itself a very important trend — but that still needs to continue further. There is no reason

for the same parties to endlessly discuss the same substantive material in the same forums.

Israel is still disappointed, however, by the automatic yearly repetition of resolutions without any regard to their usefulness or relevance. We would like to see a reduction in the overall number of resolutions, as well as a consolidation of resolutions into omnibus resolutions, as was the practice in the past. We would also welcome an increase in the number of resolutions that are considered on a biannual rather than on an annual basis. That would save time, money and paperwork. Clearly, any future attempt to add additional repetition to an already redundant agenda should be abandoned. Not only are such wastes of resources harmful to the proceedings and credibility of the United Nations; they are often harmful to the underlying issues as well.

Finally, towards those same worthwhile ends, Israel once again calls on the United Nations to review and improve the terms and conditions governing the accreditation and participation of non-governmental organizations in United Nations conferences. Just as inefficiencies in the agenda can subvert the United Nations work, so too can the hidden agendas of politicized outside bodies. In that context, Israel looks forward to closely examining the recommendations of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations, as well as the Secretary-General's report on their implementation.

In conclusion, Israel welcomes any and all efforts to strengthen the way that the United Nations works to meet its goals — to make it more efficient, more focused and more vital. The imperative is clear: The more our agenda possesses inefficiency, the more inefficiency will possess us.

Mr. Arifi (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): The irreversible changes that international relations have undergone since the end of the cold war, the increasingly unpredictable threats to international peace and security and the effects of rapid globalization, compounded by imperative development needs, present major challenges to our Organization today.

As was clearly illustrated in this year's general debate, United Nations reform has become an urgent need and sine qua non for restoring multilateralism and for endowing it with the strength, efficiency and credibility it requires in order to preserve peace and, in partnership, to guarantee the implementation of the objectives of sustainable development.

In his closing statement in the general debate, the President of the General Assembly noted that, of the 190 statements, 121 addressed the issue of United Nations reform, emphasizing both the progress achieved and the road that lies ahead. A considerable number of those statements were in fact replete with specific proposals urging us to continue improving the functioning and effectiveness of our Organization. The fertile debate and the promising ideas put forward therein should be better exploited and put to constructive use. Perhaps the Secretariat could prepare a compilation of the ideas and proposals suggested by various Member States. Such a compilation would spare us a repetitive debate and form the basis for a useful working paper for our ongoing work on that topic.

The unanimous appeal launched by our leaders to revisit and strengthen the architecture of the United Nations, an indispensable meeting place for all humankind, arose from the concern that the ineffectiveness of multilateralism in addressing those problems can only exacerbate the threat to peace, security and international stability. Thus, the creation of a comprehensive medium- and long-term reform plan is more imperative than ever.

The key element of that reform remains redressing the democratic deficit in the Security Council through an expanded membership that reflects, in a representative and equitable manner, the new geopolitical circumstances and takes the sociocultural dimension into consideration. Naturally, we eagerly await the options to be submitted by the Panel of Eminent Persons and hope that the international community will find a formula that does not exacerbate existing differences.

The Security Council must fully shoulder its responsibilities in the maintenance of international peace and security. Its membership must better reflect the new realities of our world by providing a greater place for the developing countries and by being more equitably representative. In that context, an increase in the number of non-permanent seats, with a seat reserved for those States that contribute heavily to peacekeeping operations, is a necessity.

The Council's reform, and its enlargement in particular, should be seen, however, not as a mere

mathematical exercise, but as an ongoing and gradual process to include, within reasonable parameters, the elements of balance, rationalization, effectiveness and legitimacy. Such a process can succeed, of course, only if it is the product of all Member States represented at the highest level. In that context, the President of the General Assembly, with the assistance of a limited working group of his own choosing, could play a fundamental role in the process of consultation among various regional groups by preparing a framework for work to create greater visibility and to promote a possible decision to be taken during the sixtieth anniversary year. My country is ready effectively to contribute to that exercise and to provide all necessary support for its successful conclusion.

While the expansion of the Security Council is certainly a basic element of United Nations reform, we must not forget that the problem of reforming the international system is much broader than that. The General Assembly, our universal body par excellence, must face the challenges confronting the Organization. The revitalization process, already under way, must continue with a view to strengthening the authority of the General Assembly and to adapt its work to the increase in the number of its members, as well as to promote the development of modern communication and information technology.

The interdependence of peace and development requires interaction among the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council to create better coordination and synergy among those principal organs in dealing with the issues before them. The implementation of Article 24 of the United Nations Charter will contribute to achieving that goal. Indeed, under Article 24 the Security Council shall submit, periodically, special reports on questions of international interest to the General Assembly for its consideration.

Specific follow-up to the General Assembly's debate on the annual report of the Security Council is another measure which would help strengthen the role of the Assembly. Here, the Assembly should not confine itself merely to information-gathering, but rather should respond, after intensive consideration, by taking the necessary decisions.

The ever-growing importance of economic and social questions has bestowed a primary role on the Economic and Social Council, which in the future must play its development role as a generator of economic cooperation among States. Closer cooperation by the Economic and Social Council with the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization (WTO) will certainly open up new prospects in drawing up development policies and strategies.

In that context, we welcome the efforts of the Secretariat in implementing the agenda for further change, which the Secretary-General submitted to us in 2002 (see A/57/387 and Corr.1). We welcome in particular the efforts to align United Nations activities with the priorities jointly defined at the Millennium Summit and the international conferences of the 1990s, as well as the significant reorganization of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management and the Department of Public Information.

The development of partnerships between the United Nations and various non-State actors, including through greater participation of civil society and the private sector, will help to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations and enrich the debate.

Here, we wish to pay a well-deserved tribute to the conclusions of the recent report of the Secretary-General in response to the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations (A/59/354). We believe that strengthening the capacity of non-governmental organizations in developing countries should be a priority at the present stage.

In order to revitalize the United Nations system, we must all contribute to the process of reform and revitalization of the United Nations and its principal organs. The Panel of Eminent Persons could stimulate debate and fuel the process, particularly if it tackles the two key elements of the institutional architecture: peacekeeping centred on the Security Council, and the coordination of economic cooperation, centred on a body which would truly exercise that function in connection with the specialized agencies.

We hope that political will and a long-term vision will win the day.

Mr. Wiranataadmadja (Indonesia): The delegation of Indonesia would like to express its appreciation to you, Mr. President, for convening this joint debate, which is an opportunity to discuss the subject of the revitalization of the General Assembly.

The purpose of the debate is unquestionably to re-establish the role of the General Assembly. Let me also take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to the Deputy Secretary-General for her introduction to the debate. Before going further, my delegation also associates itself with the statement made this morning by Algeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement on the subject of the revitalization of the General Assembly.

Indonesia welcomed the adoption of resolutions 58/126 and 58/316, which were aimed at strengthening, revitalizing and reinvigorating the General Assembly in its role as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative body of the United Nations. Indonesia also appreciates the initiative and role of His Excellency Mr. Julian Hunte, President of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, in the process leading to their adoption. Those two resolutions indicate clearly that many issues remain to be resolved in the effort to enhance the authority and the role of the General Assembly, including in its relationship with other principal organs of the United Nations, namely the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. My delegation hopes that the forthcoming work will bring substantive progress in achieving a clearly defined relationship among those three principal organs, consistent with the Charter.

While the process of revitalization is far from over, Mr. President, my delegation believes that your skill and experience will yield progress on the issue. My delegation also hopes that the revitalization exercise will proceed even further and more substantively in the near future.

It is also important to stress that the strengthening of the United Nations system must be aimed at enabling the Organization to perform at optimal efficiency in order to deliver the benefits of development and peace. In that regard, any proposal by the Secretary-General should be considered within the context of the extent to which it could support the Organization's efforts in the development field.

That will require the Secretary-General to allocate more resources to development activities as well as first-rate staff to enable the Secretariat to deliver adequate services to Member States. In that context, we would like to emphasize the need to achieve equal geographical distribution and gender balance, particularly at the level of policy-making within the Secretariat, without compromising the excellence in the quality of personnel that is the strength of the Organization.

Finally, let me also touch upon the report of the Secretary-General in response to the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations (A/59/354). My delegation agrees that there is a need to make the United Nations a more outward-looking organization and to expand its dialogue with various constituencies and facilitate their input into the debate on issues of global significance.

In that connection, however, we would like to note that some of the proposals contained in the reports, such as those relating to the participation of non-governmental organizations in intergovernmental bodies, must be seriously and carefully considered before any action is taken. Such proposals appear difficult to operationalize, and would therefore have to be clearly defined. We look forward to discussing those proposals.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.

United Nations A/59/PV.20

General Assembly
Fifty-ninth session

Official Records

20th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 5 October 2004, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Ping ..... (Gabon)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda items 52 and 54 (*continued*)

Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly

Strengthening of the United Nations system

Report of the Secretary-General (A/59/354)

Mr. Baduri (Eritrea): I should like at the outset to join previous speakers in expressing sincere thanks and appreciation to the Secretary-General for his four special reports on the issues under discussion (A/59/CRP.3 to CRP.6).

The people of Eritrea, whose long association with the United Nations before independence was not, to say the least, a happy one, and whose memories of resolution 390 (V) — which illegitimately federated their country with Ethiopia — are agonizing, nevertheless welcome the decision to reform, revitalize and strengthen the United Nations system, especially the General Assembly. It should be recalled that it was not the Security Council, but the General Assembly, which, on the basis of Article 10 of the Charter, gave the United Nations stamp of approval to the ill-fated federation, on the basis that it was exercising a rightful decision-making power provided for by the Charter. It was one of the first decisions — if not actually the first decision — made by the General Assembly. The Assembly exercised that power because some in the Security Council recognized that any similar resolution in the Council would be threatened by a veto. That is the irony of history.

That, however, is history. The United Nations is the only Organization whose continued existence — albeit with some necessary changes — has been considered indispensable to meet the challenges of the new world order of globalization. It is noteworthy that the heads of State or Government, who met at the Millennium Summit, decided to reaffirm the central position of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative policy-making and representative organ of the United Nations, and to enable it to play that role effectively.

It is also to be recalled that a preponderant number of States have, during previous annual sessions of the General Assembly, voiced strong support for the expeditious revitalization of the General Assembly, although a couple of decades ago it was being ridiculed and dismissed as an effete, ineffective and irresponsible debating society. Needless to say, Eritreans warily accept and welcome the change in attitudes — believing that it is a reflection of the times — but fervently hope that no other people will be punished by anything similar to resolution 390 (V).

Having said that, the Eritrean delegation wishes to endorse the recommendations incorporated into the statement by Algeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. In addition, we wish to make the following observations.

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First, the need for reform and strengthening of the United Nations system, particularly the revitalization of the General Assembly, stems from the recognition that, during the first 50 years of its existence — that is, the era of the cold war — there was a steady erosion of its powers, a decline in its prestige and an increase in its marginalization by the powerful States and their allies. As a result, there was a loss of trust and confidence — and there was even cynicism — on the part of its other Members. The end of the cold war, the advent of the era of globalization and the ensuing convergence of interests — even when it was minimal — among the erstwhile antagonists created a salubrious environment of cooperation and encouraged reassessment of the United Nations.

Secondly, the revitalization of the General Assembly cannot be successfully effected without corresponding reform in the principal organs of the United Nations — including the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the Secretariat — and in allied institutions, including the Bretton Woods institutions, as well as in the relationship between the United Nations and other international and regional organizations. In that connection, the Eritrean delegation welcomes the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons, whose mandate was to undertake a comprehensive review of the balance and effectiveness of the major organs and institutions of the United Nations system.

Thirdly, any reform effort must, of course, be in consonance with the purposes and objectives of the Millennium Development Goals and the numerous declarations and programmes of action of the major United Nations conferences that were held during the last years of the twentieth century and the early years of the twenty-first century and which defined and enunciated the new concepts, values, norms and principles that must guide humanity and govern future international relations in the new international order.

Fourthly, economic and social development — broadly defined as the satisfaction of the economic, social, cultural and humanitarian needs of humanity and specified in Chapter IX of the Charter as original principles of the United Nations — must be given equal prominence as security issues. Freedom from want and freedom from fear must be regarded as equally important. Indeed, the definition of security now encompasses the former as well as the latter. In that connection, institutional restructuring of the Organization's social and economic sectors becomes appropriate. Eritrea supports the efforts made to consolidate the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and to enable it to acquire a strategic planning capacity.

Fifthly, Eritrea endorses the proposal, made by the previous President, Mr. Julian Hunte, to consider the issue of the strengthening the General Assembly in two clusters, one dealing with the enhancement of the role of the General Assembly on the basis of the relevant provisions of the Charter, and the other, with the working methods of the Assembly. However, both clusters must be addressed in tandem, because success in one area without any achievements in the other would be meaningless.

The reform and strengthening of the United Nations — particularly the revitalization of the General Assembly — is viewed by many as a matter of urgent priority. The momentum that has been triggered must be sustained. Yet it must be recognized that the desired change cannot be achieved without the required political commitment. If there is to be success, commitment must be genuine and must be translated into concrete action.

Mr. Dhakal (Nepal): At the outset, let me warmly congratulate you, Sir, on your well-deserved election to preside over the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. I assure you of our cooperation to make that session a successful one. My delegation joins others in expressing its appreciation to the former President of the Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Julian Hunte, for his commitment to advancing the work of revitalizing the General Assembly during his term. We also express our sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General for his relentless efforts to move United Nations reform forward and for his report (A/59/354) submitted to the Assembly.

My delegation attaches great importance to the work of strengthening of the United Nations and revitalizing the General Assembly. I commend you, Mr. President, for the commitment you have shown to carry forward the agenda of United Nations reform, including the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made yesterday by the Permanent Representative of Algeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. My

delegation wishes to make a few observations on the extremely important issue before us.

Nepal firmly believes that the efforts aimed at revitalizing the General Assembly should focus mainly on addressing the burning issues that the world faces today, such as terrorism, poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition and diseases such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic, malaria and tuberculosis. The United Nations is undertaking efforts aimed at achieving the targets of the Millennium Development Goals, and next year's high-level event will be an important step in revealing the progress made on those goals.

Nepal believes that all work of the United Nations should embody the fundamental objectives set out in its Charter. Nepal has always supported efforts aimed at strengthening the United Nations and making its activities more effective and results-oriented. Nepal expressed its position on issues on the agenda during the debate last year. My delegation reiterates its position on those issues in view of its relevance to the work of the General Assembly.

There is no denying that the United Nations requires more efficiency and effectiveness to carry out its tasks. Past efforts have made some progress in that direction. Two resolutions — resolution 58/126 and resolution 58/316 — adopted by the General Assembly have been important steps aimed at charting out a framework for revitalizing the Assembly. Nepal made contributions to those resolutions by actively participating in the negotiations. We continue to support their objectives of enhancing the authority and the role of the General Assembly and improving its efficiency and effectiveness. As envisaged by the resolutions, this year the General Assembly elected its Vice-Presidents and the Bureaux of its Main Committees well before the opening of the session. That process needs to be institutionalized in future as well, to assure a smooth transition of the Bureaux of those bodies. Some changes have also taken place in the working methods of the intergovernmental bodies, such as the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, as well as the latter's functional Commissions.

We have witnessed some procedural reforms, for example the biennialization, triennialization and clustering of agenda items. Reducing time for the general debate and eliminating conference services after hours, have also helped in utilizing resources in a disciplined and efficient manner. Such reforms have certainly been useful for reducing costs and increasing efficiency, but, by themselves, they are not sufficient to make the United Nations more effective in terms of its outputs and results.

We have also noted that the changes have remained procedural in nature, while substantive reforms have been lacking. There is a need for determined efforts to provide the United Nations with the ability to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. We need bold initiatives to make substantive change as well, and to vigorously shape the United Nations into an Organization that has the vision, the means and the tools to address the problems of a new world.

Nepal is committed to working with those who are determined to put the United Nations at the centre of multilateralism and to take bold reform initiatives to revive the Organization. At this juncture, reforms must be bolder in approach and more innovative in content. They must be comprehensive and coherent as well as substantive and doable. This debate affords us the opportunity to elaborate such needed reforms.

We therefore need to take a series of steps for procedural and structural reorganization and revitalization. Last year, my delegation made some suggestions that were described with the acronym "CAMSSIB" — cluster and consolidate the agenda; adapt the agenda to the emerging needs; merge and reorganize the committees and subcommittees; strengthen the Office of the Assembly President; stagger the work of the General Assembly throughout the session; implement the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly; and bring budget allocation into conformity with priorities.

Nepal reiterates its view that strengthening the Office of the President has received short shrift so far. We must reinforce the Office to make it more visible in structure, more respectable in stature and more substantive in content. The President should have the capacity and resources to do his task effectively, particularly in following up the resolutions of the General Assembly.

Effective implementation of the resolutions on a selective basis would enhance the primacy of the United Nations system. Today it is inconceivable to implement the nearly 300 resolutions that are turned out each year. Only the existence of concrete results of

the work of the General Assembly will create a strong constituency among people around the world, and strengthen the most representative body of the United Nations. We support efforts to link the budget with the priorities of the United Nations. We also underline the imperative to strike a balance between the requirement for legislative control and the need for administrative flexibility in order to optimize the results of United Nations activities.

Nepal supported the appointment by the Secretary-General of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations, under the leadership of the former President of Brazil, Mr. Fernando Henrique Cardoso. My delegation thanks the Panel for its hard work and its comprehensive report containing valuable suggestions for improving meaningful relationships between the world body and civil society. We consider that improving such relationships is also part of United Nations reform. Establishment of a special fund to enhance the civil society of the South would certainly facilitate their participation in the work of the United Nations.

Participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from developing countries is small, when compared to NGO participation from developed countries, and the former should therefore be increased. My delegation, however, supports the view that efforts towards increased participation of civil society should not change the intergovernmental nature of the General Assembly and other organs of the United Nations.

We consider that the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations deserves serious and careful consideration by the Assembly.

Lastly, the international community has the obligation to make the world a more peaceful, prosperous and just place for all. It has recognized that imperative in a number of global compacts, including the Millennium Declaration.

Nepal is pleased to engage itself in reforming the United Nations and in helping the Organization to win the minds and hearts of ordinary people around the world. We believe it will help to formally establish the United Nations within a global public consensus. For this, the world body must focus on implementing its resolutions and decisions by bridging the gap between its words and its deeds.

Mrs. Núñez de Odreman (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the Government of Hugo Chávez Frías and the people of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, I wish to pay tribute to the President of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly and wish him every success in his leadership during the session.

I also take this opportunity to place on record our appreciation for the endeavours and accomplishments of your predecessor, Foreign Minister Julian Hunte, who, by giving priority to the topics now before us — revitalization of the General Assembly and strengthening of the United Nations system — stimulated significant progress which should enable the Organization to become a more effective body for resolving the major problems of humankind.

We associate ourselves with the statement made by the Ambassador of Brazil, on behalf of the Rio Group, in his capacity as Secretary pro tempore. We wish also to reaffirm the support and cooperation of our country in this very important mission of achieving our objectives efficiently.

It is vital that there be change in the United Nations. We must make its political arenas available on an equal footing; revitalize the General Assembly as a democratic, deliberative and policy-making body at the highest level in the Organization; develop the role of the Economic and Social Council as an instrument for devising development programmes designed to combat poverty; and together exert our efforts to democratize the Security Council. Those changes will lead to greater representation and institutional balance and will promote a social agenda.

Such change is even more imperative if we bear in mind the increase in the number of Member States of the Organization in recent times. In fact, today it is plain to see how little equity there is in the constitution of the principal organs of the United Nations; in particular, in the case of the Security Council, the current structure is unrepresentative. For Venezuela, as the Assembly knows, the idea of the reform of the Security Council means making profound and radical changes which necessarily includes eliminating the right of veto.

We have carefully read the report of Secretary-General Kofi Annan, in response to the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations, which notes the need to expand and

deepen relations with non-governmental organizations. This may facilitate intergovernmental debates within the United Nations on questions of global importance.

Based on the proposals made by the Panel in its report, a number of suggestions were made for the participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in intergovernmental bodies. Venezuela will continue to study those proposals, which are designed to strengthen the participation of civil society through NGOs, with the understanding that within the United Nations, Member States alone have jurisdiction to take decisions, and that Governments are the interlocutors as regards relations between the United Nations and its Member States. Moreover, our country has not had the most happiest experience with non-governmental organizations operating in the Americas, since those that are controlled from the outside have been part of an imperial and transnational plan to destabilize our institutions in recent years.

Venezuela acknowledges that the United Nations must reach out in order to consolidate its coordinating function worldwide in the consideration of the various issues of interest to the international community. That openness and interaction, however, must be the subject of more careful study so that we can assess their range of potential consequences.

Venezuela supports and will work to promote all initiatives to strengthen the role of the United Nations and respect for and observance of the principles of its constitutive Charter. International security issues are fundamental and must be productively debated in this arena, eschewing rhetoric, so as to address the root causes of the dangers — that is, the real origins of the threats to security. We have a broad and holistic vision of international security based on humanistic and multidimensional criteria that combine social, environmental, economic, cultural and military factors. Only such an integrated approach will allow us correctly to apply the norms that the United Nations has developed to safeguard the rights and fundamental freedoms of humankind.

War and conflict can be avoided if people enjoy security, manifested in adequate nutrition, health care, education, housing and leisure. If those factors were guaranteed, the Security Council would become unnecessary. Prioritizing all those objectives would allow us to revitalize the Assembly and to strengthen the entire United Nations system, which is necessary if we are to meet the new challenges posed by current international circumstances.

Ms. Enkhtsetseg (Mongolia): My delegation welcomes the combined discussion of the two important issues of strengthening the United Nations system and revitalizating the General Assembly, the first agenda items to be debated following the general debate, where the majority of world leaders reaffirmed anew their determination to speed up the reform of the world Organization so that it can effectively meet the emerging threats and challenges of the new millennium.

We share the view that the Secretary-General's report, in response to the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations, and the Cardoso report itself give us much food for thought as we move on with the reform of the United Nations.

My delegation also wishes to thank the Deputy Secretary-General for her lucid introduction of the agenda items before us.

Mongolia shares the conclusion of the Secretary-General that expanding and deepening the Organization's relationship with civil society will further strengthen the United Nations and enhance the quality and depth of policy analysis for the intergovernmental debates on issues of global importance. We welcome the major thrust of the Cardoso report on the need to make the world Organization a more outward-looking institution, which would help to connect the global with the local. In pursuing those objectives, indeed, an effective multi-stakeholder partnership has to be developed.

However, as to the specific modalities of engaging with civil society and the other pertinent recommendations put forward in the Secretary-General's report, the views expressed so far by the Member States suggest that further consideration and discussion are needed, while bearing in mind the undisputed intergovernmental character of the world Organization.

The issue of strengthening the United Nations system is a multifaceted task encompassing, inter alia, the restructuring, reform and revitalization of its principal organs, as well as the streamlining of the Secretariat. Among those, no doubt, the revitalization of the General Assembly and the reform of the Security

Council are top priorities. On the reform of the Security Council, my delegation will make a separate statement, as we come to discuss the agenda item on that issue in the plenary.

In moving the reform process forward, all countries ought actively to participate and to display genuine political commitment and determination, as we believe that the United Nations can be made as effective as we, the Member States, want it to be. In that regard, Mongolia is eagerly awaiting the High-level Panel's report on threats, challenges and change and ensuing recommendations by the Secretary-General, so that we can collectively engage in moving reform forward by taking bold steps as we commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations next year.

On the issue of the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, my delegation shares the view that the General Assembly ought to regain its central role as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative body of the United Nations. That should be the main objective of the ongoing revitalization process, to which Mongolia has been and remains fully committed.

We highly commend the work carried out by the former President of the General Assembly, Mr. Julian Hunte, and his facilitators to revitalize the General Assembly. The two resolutions — 58/126 and 58/316 — adopted under his skilful leadership have proved to be by far the most far-reaching actions in more than a decade. They have laid the tangible groundwork for increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the General Assembly. Significant as they are, we should nevertheless aim higher and work with vigour to further enhance the role and authority of the General Assembly by undertaking truly innovative approaches in the months ahead.

We share the view that the recently introduced practice of holding periodic meetings between the Presidents of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, as well as the measures designed to strengthen the Office of the President and the institutional development of the General Committee, are all important beginnings in enhancing the role of the General Assembly.

Furthermore, the periodic submission of specific subject-oriented reports by the Security Council to the General Assembly on issues of current international concern; increased interactive debates; better conceptualization of the contents of the agenda of the General Assembly, including through the clustering, biennialization, triennialization and elimination of items; the reduction of the heavy volume of documentation; and the drafting and adoption of concise, focused and action-oriented resolutions will help to further advance the ongoing process of improving the working methods of the General Assembly.

In that regard, we welcome the fact that the agenda of the current session of the General Assembly has been divided into nine headings, corresponding to the priorities of the Organization, with a view to achieving a better presentation of the issues and challenges faced by the Assembly and to making its work more accessible, in pursuance of resolution 58/316. However, we also believe that no rationalization effort should in any way diminish the importance of development issues on the agenda, as they pertain to the economic and social well-being of peoples, on whose very behalf the Organization was founded.

Over the last decade, the General Assembly, through the adoption of its resolutions, has outlined specific measures aimed at rationalizing its working methods and improving its efficiency. All in all, those measures put more emphasis on the rationalization of the agenda of the General Assembly and on improving its working methods. Although they have had a positive bearing on the functioning of the General Assembly, we believe that there is still ample room for further improvement to be made to the substantive aspects of the revitalization of the General Assembly — that is, enhancing its role and authority.

In that respect, my delegation is of the view that innovative approaches need to be further explored in order better to monitor the follow-up of the resolutions of the General Assembly and, most importantly, to ensure their implementation by Member States. Some thoughts and suggestions in that regard have already been aired by previous speakers that we believe merit further discussion and deliberation in the months ahead.

We also look forward in that regard to the Secretary-General's report on all aspects of the implementation of resolutions 58/126 and 58/316, to be submitted to the General Assembly at its sixtieth

session. My delegation trusts that it will provide us with actionable recommendations to further revitalize the General Assembly.

In conclusion, let me say that we believe in your leadership, Sir, and trust that you will successfully guide us to work collectively towards making the world Organization better equipped to serve the needs of its Member States and to effectively meet the formidable challenges of today's world. In so doing, you can fully count on my delegation's unreserved support and collaboration.

Mr. Wali (Nigeria): Nigeria welcomes the opportunity to take part in this joint debate. I wish to express the appreciation of the delegation of Nigeria to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his initiatives and efforts at strengthening the United Nations. Those efforts are in conformity with resolution 58/316 and the declarations of the Millennium Summit, at which world leaders pledged to invigorate the United Nations and to make it more effective in the promotion of world peace and sustainable development. We also pay special tribute to Mr. Julian Hunte, the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session, for his outstanding work, particularly on the revitalization of the General Assembly. Nigeria also aligns itself with the statement made by the delegation of Algeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement on the agenda item before us.

The United Nations has made significant progress in the area of peace and security in the last couple of years as a result of its increasingly proactive role in the resolution of persistent and emerging global challenges. That has greatly enhanced the image of the Organization in the international community. Consequently, the peoples of the world and the international community now expect a lot from the United Nations. The reorganization and enhancement of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, following the implementation of the Brahimi Panel report, have resulted in the improvement of the capacities of the United Nations in the discharge of its obligations in the maintenance of international peace and security. As a result, the Organization can more effectively deploy and manage complex peacekeeping and peace-building operations.

In that regard, we commend the United Nations efforts in peacekeeping and peace-building in Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire. We reaffirm our support for the introduction of the rule of law, gender mainstreaming and a multidimensional approach to peacekeeping operations now adopted by the United Nations.

Nigeria commends the United Nations commitment to the eradication of poverty, hunger, malnutrition and diseases, especially the HIV/AIDS pandemic, malaria and tuberculosis. To build on those modest achievements, we call on the United Nations to assist developing countries to achieve the ideals of sustainable development, in accordance with the Millennium Development Goals and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the Monterrey Consensus. We also call on the United Nations and the international community to show the same commitment they have demonstrated in the area of peace and security in addressing social and economic issues in developing countries. In that regard, the United Nations should explore avenues for resolving the crippling debt burden on developing countries, since the international community can no longer afford a situation in which more than two thirds of its membership are incapacitated by the weight of external debt.

The linkage between peace and security, on the one hand, and poverty eradication and economic development on the other should be reflected in policy strategies and approaches of the United Nations on those issues. The capacity of the United Nations in those areas should be strengthened with the deployment of the requisite resources for assistance to developing countries.

The United Nations is playing a commendable role in building strong partnerships for conflict resolution and development. In that regard, Nigeria welcomes the partnership between the United Nations, regional and subregional organizations, and non-State actors, such as civil society organizations, interest groups, universities and the like.

We welcome the increasing participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in intergovernmental bodies. In that regard, it is gratifying to note that the General Assembly and the Main Committees continue to involve the NGOs in their deliberations, meetings and panel discussions. We hope that that healthy development will be sustained in the interests and benefit of all. We therefore endorse the Secretary-General's recommendation and

suggestion on the increase in the participation of NGOs, particularly on improving the involvement of NGOs from developing countries as well as strengthening the institutional capacity of the United Nations for engagement with the NGOs.

Nigeria supports the revitalization of the General Assembly to enable it to discharge its responsibilities more effectively, as outlined in the Charter. That would also enhance its capacity to respond promptly and decisively to global threats and challenges. We reiterate our support for those measures already taken by Member States to reform the General Assembly. We are all beneficiaries of the improved coordination of the work of the Assembly and the Committees and of the regular meetings between the President and Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly, representatives of major groups, chairs of regional groups and representatives of the Secretary-General, with the objective of ensuring the better planning of conferences. We reaffirm our support for General Assembly resolutions 58/126 and 58/316, aimed at further revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

We note with satisfaction resolutions 58/316 and 58/317, by which the General Assembly has reaffirmed the central role of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security. Nigeria therefore calls on Member States to demonstrate their commitment to those two and other United Nations resolutions by supporting the multilateral process and the collective decisions of the United Nations. As the most important representative legislative organ of the United Nations, the General Assembly should play its central role in the pursuit of the objectives and purposes of the Organization. To that end, the General Assembly should initiate more interactive debates and discussions on critical issues of interest on social, economic, political, peace and security issues. There is a need to streamline the agenda of the plenary and to improve the working methods of the General Committee in order to enable it to play a more active role in the work of the General Assembly.

On the reform of the work of the Main Committees, Nigeria holds the view that no Committee should be singled out for reform, since the work of all the Committees is linked and interwoven. Consequently, the reform of the Main Committees should be carried out in a holistic manner.

In conclusion, Nigeria believes that the strengthening of the United Nations and the revitalization of the General Assembly are long-term issues that require time and the collective efforts and political will of Member States. We therefore reaffirm our support for the efforts aimed at strengthening the United Nations and assure the Secretary-General of our continued and active participation in the process.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): We wish at the outset to express the Syrian delegation's support for the statement made by the representative of brotherly Algeria yesterday on behalf of the working group of the Non-Aligned Movement on reforming the United Nations and revitalizing the work of the General Assembly.

We also wish to express our appreciation for the role played by your predecessor, Sir, in managing and leading the deliberations of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session. We trust that, under your leadership, the Member States will complete the progress towards revitalizing the General Assembly.

The Syrian Arab Republic has positively and actively participated in all the discussions on revitalizing the role of the General Assembly. Our delegation took part in the formulation of resolutions 58/126 and 58/316, the appropriate, effective and full implementation of which should be given the Assembly's due attention. We believe that the Assembly should focus on following up and monitoring those resolutions at this session.

It is worth noting in that respect that the implementation of those resolutions has indeed come a long way since the President of the General Assembly and the Chairpersons of the Main Committees and their bureaus were elected early in this session. Those elections have undoubtedly facilitated the work of the General Assembly and its Main Committees, and we have begun to feel their positive impact. Moreover, setting time frames for the Assembly's work facilitates the work of many delegations.

At the forthcoming discussions, our delegation will participate in the preliminary analysis of the completed phases of the revitalization process. The in-depth evaluation of those phases will enrich our discussions with a view to helping us to develop our working methods and to prepare for the comprehensive review that must be held at the sixtieth session of the

General Assembly, in accordance with resolution 58/316.

Syria reaffirms its commitment to the revitalization of the General Assembly. We believe that the philosophy of reform must be based on the fundamental principle that reforms are means of development and not a goal in themselves. The delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic therefore believes that the revitalization of the General Assembly must seek to enable the Assembly to play its leading role as the most appropriate body for international deliberations and the most dependable decision-making centre. In that regard, we must focus on empowering the Assembly to play its lead role as the highest legislative authority among the principal organs of the United Nations, particularly the Security Council, whose inflated agenda includes thematic issues that fall squarely within the purview of the General Assembly and its Main Committees.

In that context, Syria believes that one important step in the revitalization of the General Assembly's work is the search for ways and means to implement all of its resolutions. The implementation of its resolutions is one important element in promoting the Assembly's credibility and in helping it to resume its due role. The appeal to truncate those resolutions therefore has no serious place in the revitalization of the General Assembly. Rather, it aims to minimize and distort the Assembly's role by disabling an important aspect of its activities. We must therefore fully implement and activate the resolutions adopted by the Assembly and create the appropriate mechanisms for monitoring their implementation. In so doing, we will take a firm step along the path of revitalizing the work of the General Assembly and entrenching international legitimacy.

Syria is closely following the work of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, established by the Secretary-General. The Panel is entrusted with addressing current and future threats to international peace and security, as well as the prevailing situation of the main bodies of the United Nations. It will offer recommendations for strengthening their position and role. Syria will take part in the deliberations and discussions of the Member States on the proposals and opinions to be submitted by the Panel.

In the context of strengthening the United Nations system, my delegation has read the Secretary-General's report, contained in document A/59/354, concerning the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations. We note the Secretary-General's recommendations in that regard; my delegation will actively evaluate and discuss them with all other delegations, giving due consideration to the importance of maintaining the intergovernmental nature of the Organization as laid down in its Charter. Many delegations have focused on that issue in their statements in the course of this debate.

In conclusion, we have not yet completed the revitalization of the General Assembly. Progress in achieving important results in that process must be accompanied by reform of the United Nations system in general in order to make it more democratic and transparent and to guarantee adherence by all the main bodies to their mandates.

Mr. Latheef (Maldives): The United Nations was born at the right time for the right purpose on the right platform. There is no doubt that it has, over the past 58 years, performed well in achieving its objectives. However, today, the geopolitical map of the world is very different from that of 1945. The technological revolution and the globalization process have made the global village a single community demanding that the Organization make increasingly complex and far-reaching decisions. That is the backdrop against which we should approach reforms of our unique and indispensable Organization.

My delegation believes that the resolve of the international community for reforming and revitalizing the Organization has never been greater. Almost the entire membership has expressed its desire to see significant change in the way the Organization does business. No one in this Assembly will deny the relevance of reforms and all have at one time or another talked about it or expressed an idea or two on the subject. However, all too often we have seen ourselves stuck when it come to specifics. If we wish to make our reform efforts successful, then we should all be ready to exercise maximum flexibility and to demonstrate our political will to restore the credibility and legitimacy of the Organization by giving multilateralism the centre stage.

My delegation is convinced that, as a matter of principle, the General Assembly's universality justifies its playing the most central role in the Organization. Restoring and maintaining the authority of the

Assembly, therefore, is crucial if the Organization is to be effective. We believe that the various proposals to streamline and rationalize the agenda by biennializing or triennializing and clustering related agenda items would enable the Assembly to focus more on the substance of the issues.

We also believe that fashioning the decisions of the Assembly with follow-up mechanisms built into them and ensuring consensus as a decision-making tool, where appropriate, would further strengthen the effectiveness of the Assembly. In that regard, my delegation views the adoption of resolutions 58/126 and 58/316 as a major step forward. The implementation and effective follow-up of those resolutions are essential and should be given maximum priority.

The reforms implemented thus far in the economic and social sectors of the Organization are already bearing fruit. Greater transparency; the involvement of major stakeholders, such as the Bretton Woods Institutions and the World Trade Organization; and closer collaboration with civil society in those fields would, in our view, enhance coordination and harmonization more effectively.

Taking advantage of the advances in information technology, in our view, can help the Organization cut costs and reduce its reliance on paper documentation. In that regard, we view the modernization of the conference facilities to be inevitable. Although the initial costs of the conversion may be high, a modern state-of-the-art conference facility would, in our view, generate savings and increase the effectiveness and capacity of the Organization to service its membership.

The Organization should be well financed, well equipped and well structured at all times. Reforms will not work unless they are backed by both financial and qualified human resources. Fulfilling our mandatory obligations of paying our assessed contributions in full and on time is therefore of vital importance. As long as the financial flow of the Organization remains shaky and unpredictable, we cannot expect it to be effective in delivering its mandates.

Change in the United Nations, created to address the needs, hopes and aspirations of a fast-changing world citizenry, is an inevitability we must all welcome. There is no doubt that the more representative the United Nations is, the more democratic it would be, and that the more accountable the United Nations is, the more efficient it would be, thus benefiting us all, small and large, weak and powerful, rich and poor.

Mr. Savua (Fiji): The issues confronting the international community are enormous and complex. New and emerging issues, including challenges and threats, are added on every year. This year, the United Nations is again inundated with a broad range of issues, ranging from hunger and poverty to security, terrorism and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The burden has indeed grown much heavier. The United Nations is at a critical juncture in its history and, indeed, at a crossroads. Therefore, the call for the reform and revitalization of the United Nations systems and structures is timely and deserves our support.

Fiji, like other small island nations, attaches great importance to the reform process and reaffirms its willingness to be involved to ensure the improvement of United Nations systems and structures so that they can ably meet the challenges placed before them by Member States and their peoples. It is heartening to note, and also to our credit, that the reform has taken place because of the timely intervention of Member States, with the support and guidance of the Secretary-General and the Presidents of the General Assembly, and not in response to external pressures.

The United Nations must continue to be responsive and evolve with the times if it is to remain worthy of its role, as enshrined in its founding documents. It must continue to be relevant to all, particularly to small developing nations like Fiji, which looks to the United Nations as a beacon of hope. The biggest challenge therefore is to ensure that the reforms bring forth a rebirth of a stronger, independent and fully democratic United Nations, one which can effectively respond to the changing world but continues to retain the values that are central to human development.

While Fiji, like others, looks forward with a lot of optimism to the outcome of the work of the High-level Panel, our interests continue to focus on development and the need to ensure that it remains high on the international community's agenda. Whilst we totally agree that international peace and security and new emerging issues are important, that should, however, not turn us from our resolve to tackle the central issue of underdevelopment. The United Nations needs to reassert itself as a key development agent wherein the

formulation and implementation of important social and economic development decisions are made.

On the issue of expanding United Nations-civil society relations, the report of the Secretary-General and the Panel of Eminent Persons provide some direction on effective partnership and relations in that area. My delegation is studying the two reports, but generally we believe that the ideas and recommendations expressed in them need more digestion and consultation before any substantive decisions are made. While we are appreciative of the roles of civil society in furthering developing States' issues and agree to some extent with the Secretary-General's recommendations, we would nevertheless suggest that careful consideration be given to the extent of their involvement to ensure that the political mandates and decision-making capacities of Member States are not compromised or their status eroded.

We believe that a challenging opportunity is before us to revisit the important issues before our institution. Whilst the reform is a never-ending process, the United Nations must assure its Members that the current reform will be a milestone that will take the Organization into the twenty-first century and bring forth changes that will be acceptable to all. We certainly are mindful of the Secretary-General's remark that history will judge us harshly should we fail to do well.

Mr. Danesh-Yazdi (Islamic Republic of Iran): The revitalization of the work of the General Assembly and the strengthening of the United Nations system are two major interrelated issues on the agenda of the current session of the General Assembly. We are confident, Sir, that, under your able and wise leadership, our collective endeavours to address those two important issues will produce a positive and fruitful outcome. To that end, a great deal of effort has been made, but much remains to be done.

Allow me not to miss this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to the former President of the General Assembly, Mr. Julian Hunte, for his tireless efforts throughout the fifty-eighth session, which, among other things, led to the adoption of the two important resolutions 58/126 and 58/316. We consider those resolutions to be a positive step towards reaching a common understanding on these matters of high significance. We stand ready to support and participate in that very important endeavour.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the Ambassador of Algeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement on the agenda item on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. However, I would like to elaborate the position of my delegation on the following points.

The revitalization of the General Assembly, which is undoubtedly at the heart of the reform of the Organization, should be perceived as a dynamic and ongoing process. The two features of the process — enhancing the authority and role of the General Assembly and improving its working methods — should be pursued simultaneously. In the process of revitalizing the United Nations, the central position of the General Assembly, as the most democratic forum of the United Nations consisting of all Member States, should be improved within the framework of the United Nations system and in line with the provisions of the Charter. Such steps will strengthen the position and enhance the effectiveness of the General Assembly.

Resolution 58/126 prescribes a number of important and useful ideas for improving the work of the General Assembly. The working relation between the Security Council and the General Assembly is given particular attention. As stipulated in the resolution, improving the quality of the annual report of the Security Council to the General Assembly and the regular briefing of the President of the General Assembly by the President of the Security Council on the work of the Council, as well as the convening of periodic meetings between the Presidents of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council to ensure the increased cooperation, coordination and complementarity of the work programmes of those three organs are key elements in the process of the revitalization of the General Assembly. Moreover, the importance of the briefing of the Member States of the results of those efforts by the President of the General Assembly has been emphasized.

On the issue of the strengthening of the United Nations system, I cannot fail to extend our appreciation for the initiatives undertaken by the Secretary-General. In attaching importance to the report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, we believe that the Panel was entrusted with a huge and daunting responsibility and expect, accordingly, its recommendations to be based on the real and objective

forms of threats and challenges confronting the international community today. We are also of the view that those recommendations should by no means deviate from the fundamental rules and principles of this universal Organization. Obviously, the Member States will make the final judgement on the substantive and procedural aspects of those recommendations.

Equally important is the report of the Secretary-General, contained in document A/59/354, in response to the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations, in which the Secretary-General has suggested a number of significant recommendations that require our careful attention. We believe that sufficient time should be allocated for a thorough consideration of the Secretary-General's proposals in order to remove ambiguities that seem to have overshadowed the thrust of the report. We therefore wish to reflect on this issue in greater detail at another juncture.

In brief, we concur with the Secretary-General's view that there is considerable merit in opening the regular work of the Assembly to increased participation by accredited non-governmental organizations (NGOs). To achieve that goal, we should not lose sight of the intergovernmental nature of this body. In our view, the accreditation of NGOs to the United Nations is one of the most important issue that needs to be carefully dealt with. The proposal of the Panel on this issue has caused considerable discomfort and concern among many Members of the Organization. The present situation may not be satisfactory, but the comments of the Panel with regard to the work of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations are not encouraging either. We strongly believe that the Committee, as a subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council, is the appropriate forum to consider and approve the accreditation of non-governmental organizations. It is unfortunate that the Panel failed to make meaningful proposals to reform and streamline the work of the Committee for the improvement of the accreditation process of NGOs.

On the issue of simplifying the planning and budgetary process of the United Nations, we take note of some important measures adopted at the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly. However, due to certain shortcomings of the document, the Committee for Programme and Coordination was not able to recommend approval of the proposed strategic framework for the period 2006-2007 and recommended that the Assembly review the plan outline at its fifty-ninth session. We believe that the plan outline should be balanced by taking into account all relevant legislative mandates, including internationally agreed development goals.

We hope that a revised strategic framework can be linked to the budget outline and a reinforced system of evaluation and monitoring. We stress that the results of that comprehensive exercise should ultimately improve accountability and contribute to effective intergovernmental participation in the process in order to ensure that the best results are achieved through the effective implementation of mandates.

Last but not least, on the reform in human resources management, taking note of the omnibus resolution adopted by the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session, we hope that the continued reform in that area can improve equitable geographical distribution and the internal justice system in the Secretariat.

Mrs. Laohaphan (Thailand): On behalf of my delegation, Sir, allow me to congratulate you, first of all, on your election to preside over the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. With your able guidance, this session will certainly produce many fruitful results.

Today, my delegation is pleased to address the issue of the revitalization of the General Assembly. In that regard, my delegation wishes to pay tribute to the Secretary-General for his initiative in strengthening the Organization and also to congratulate Mr. Julian Hunte on his leadership throughout the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, as well as his efforts to place emphasis on the revitalization of the United Nations, which have provided the impetus for today's deliberations.

As a member of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), Thailand wishes to associate itself with the statement made yesterday by the Permanent Representative of Algeria on behalf of NAM.

My delegation believes that the General Assembly should and could play a constructive role in resolving international problems, as well as some non-traditional security issues. It is on that premise that my delegation therefore supports the long-standing and ongoing process of revitalizing the General Assembly. That is because the new challenges of the present time

require a mechanism that is able to withstand and overcome such challenges, many of which are unprecedented and were unanticipated when the Charter was adopted in 1945. Such a mechanism must be able to function efficiently and effectively and be relevant to the challenges it currently faces.

The revitalized General Assembly should, first of all, strengthen its role in solving problems related to international political, economic and social issues through increased synergy and coherence among the relevant bodies of the United Nations, namely the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council.

Secondly, the role of the General Assembly should not be overshadowed by that of the Security Council, as the matters taken up in the General Assembly are not limited to States' security. Therefore, in addressing non-traditional security issues, the General Assembly needs the full participation of Member States in the decision-making and implementation processes.

Over the past 12 years, 94 General Assembly resolutions regarding the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly have been adopted, but fewer than half have been implemented. The true commitment of Member States is urgently required to ensure the full implementation of our work towards a better future for this global Organization. My delegation wishes to see the full implementation of the two important resolutions 58/126 and 58/316, which reflect the merits of another step towards the revitalization of the Assembly.

My delegation is pleased to see that the working methods of the General Assembly and the Main Committees are undergoing improvements. The voting procedure of the First Committee, for instance, serves as a good example of how the United Nations can be streamlined. Moreover, The Main Committees should be allowed to review their resolutions in order to choose those on which they wish to negotiate. That approach would be less time-consuming and enable the Member States to focus on the resolutions that really need attentive negotiations. For the resolutions that merely require updates, a list can be made to identify them and to provide details of their new information.

My delegation sees the merit of revitalizing the working methods of the General Assembly by clustering issues for discussion in Main Committees, a practice that has been introduced in various Main Committees. That approach would allow the Main Committees to consider, simultaneously and in a less time-consuming fashion, issues that are closely related.

In considering issues and resolutions to be discussed in the Main Committees, my delegation wishes to reiterate that documents to be used for discussion should be circulated well in advance of the debate. Such early circulation will enhance the discussion, as Member States will have more time to examine the issue as well as to discuss them with their capitals.

Another point worth considering is the mechanism for following up the resolutions and decisions adopted by the General Assembly. My delegation is of the view that the sponsors and co-sponsors of resolutions should also play a constructive role in following up any progress made before submitting a draft resolution on the same issue to the General Assembly at its next session. Such responsibility is meant to ensure not only the ownership of resolutions, but also their full implementation. Thailand is also of the view that a review mechanism should be put in place to help the Assembly periodically to evaluate if the process of revitalization has been carried out in its entirety and to reflect views and comments made by Member States. Such a mechanism could be in the form of a consultative group of interested Member States.

Having said that, it must not be forgotten that the primary purposes of the United Nations are to promote peace and security, as well as to promote a development agenda. The States Members of the United Nations should move forward together and face the challenges in unity and in a non-confrontational manner. With those purposes in mind, the revitalization of the General Assembly should also be carried out with the objective of enhancing those purposes.

With regard to the issue of strengthening the United Nations system, my delegation would like to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for establishing the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations, under the chairmanship of the former President of Brazil, Mr. Fernando Henrique Cardoso, with a view to reviewing the existing practices concerning the relationship between the United Nations and civil society. In that regard, my delegation would like to

commend the Cardoso report for providing a valuable contribution through a number of recommendations for enhancing the reform of the United Nations, as well as the report of the Secretary-General in response to the Cardoso report, which also comes up with a number of important suggestions.

Having studied the report with great interest, my delegation welcomes the recommendation of the Panel that the United Nations should become a more outward-looking Organization. My delegation believes, in principle, that non-governmental organizations and civil society could have more important roles to play on various issues in the framework of the United Nations and in today's society. Their inputs, expertise and active participation have indeed proved to be essential in many areas. That issue deserves further deliberation and extensive study to identify the most appropriate roles and their engagement in the linkages with the United Nations.

My delegation also supports the efforts of the United Nations to connect the global with the local. My delegation believes that the fulfilment of a global agenda, such as the Millennium Development Goals, cannot be achieved by Governments alone. The participation of the public sector at all levels, including the non-governmental level, is also a key to success, since the involvement of that sector, as a stakeholder, will be an important indicator of whether or not the Goals are being fulfilled.

In conclusion, my delegation pledges its full support for the efforts aimed at strengthening the United Nations and revitalizing the work of the General Assembly, and assures the Secretary-General and you, Sir, of its continued and active participation in the process.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the Observer of the Holy See.

Archbishop Migliore (Holy See): During these last months, both public opinion and Member States have rightly focused on the structure of the bodies of the United Nations. Implicit in such a discussion has always been the question of whether the Organization's structure and functioning are adequate to the Charter's goals and about the means we can count on to implement them. It is precisely that meaning that we attach to the ongoing discussion on effective multilateralism: the capacity to fulfil the tasks set out in the Charter, some of which have been highlighted in the Millennium Development Goals.

Characterized by its universal membership, this Organization must be adapted to equally universal goals. We know from experience that the shape of political life and the influence exercised by public authority are not always up to the task of promoting the common good. Today, the universal common good is confronted with problems of worldwide dimensions — problems, therefore, that can be solved only by an authority possessed with power, organization and means coextensive with those problems and whose sphere of activity is worldwide. Thus, the bodies of the international community should be shaped so that they are capable of realizing the common good by ways and means adequate to changing historical conditions.

Up to now, the debate has laid emphasis on a wealth of reasons, motivations and valuable reflections about the institutional engineering of the United Nations. In that respect, perhaps the main point we wish to restate is that structures must reflect functions. As for the reform of the bodies, my delegation would like to suggest some terms of reference.

Strengthening the United Nations system implies the acknowledgement that it is a system founded on cooperation among States, rather than on competition, and actively nourished by constructive will, trust, the keeping of commitments and collaboration among equal and reciprocally responsible partners. Making those founding principles irreversible is a primary task.

The bottom line is the recognition of the principle that all States are by nature equal in dignity. We know very well in this institution that, even though nations may differ widely in material progress and military strength, they are all conscious of their juridical equality. It is true, however, that the nations that have attained a superior degree of scientific, cultural and economic development have the responsibility to make a greater contribution to the common cause.

On a more practical note, several essential criteria should be taken into account for reshaping the structures and revisiting the procedures of this Organization: representation and inclusiveness for the structures; impartiality, efficiency and efficacy for the procedures; and accountability and responsiveness for the outcomes.

The legitimacy of the decisions taken in the United Nations, including the Security Council, ultimately derives — as for any political body — from two pillars: the degree and scope of representation; and the process of decision-making. Decision-making will therefore tend, in general, towards greater consensus of opinion in deliberations.

It is clear that, for practical reasons, not all of the bodies of the United Nations can be arranged on the model of the General Assembly. This does not mean, however, that the set of principles and criteria to which I just referred are not applicable to the Security Council — quite the opposite: in restructuring this body, one might consider that its composition should reflect, as far as possible the world population, geopolitical regions, various levels of economic development and different civilizations. That list may not be complete, but it includes criteria that are essential in order to improve the credibility and efficacy of a reformed Security Council. Finally, it is important to consider the actual capacity and political will to contribute substantially to reach the goals that constitute a priority for the overall majority of the Member States.

At the same time, as the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations recommended in its report to the Secretary-General, the United Nations needs to become a more outward-looking Organization, capable of listening more carefully to the needs and demands of the global community.

In this context, we are reminded of the recommendation of that Panel to connect the global with the local. That criterion can be read as a modern version of the well-known notion of subsidiarity, which was a further landmark in the process of reform. In fact, because of their gravity, breadth and urgency, most problems in today's world are often simply too difficult for the rulers of individual States to solve with any degree of success. At the same time, we must make it clear that the essential purpose of the United Nations is to create world conditions in which the public authorities of each nation, its citizens and intermediate groups, can carry out their tasks, fulfil their duties and claim their rights in greater security.

It is our hope that the reform of this institution will not only help us to realize our common goals, but invest the United Nations with the necessary authority, in terms of credibility and moral legitimacy, to act for the good of the global community. That is surely the primary reason for the existence of the United Nations.

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with General Assembly resolution 57/32 of 19 November 2002, I now call on the observer for the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Mr. Johnsson (Inter-Parliamentary Union): I regret to say that the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Senator Sergio Páez Verdugo, had to be in Chile today for an important vote in parliament. I am therefore delivering his statement on behalf of the IPU.

> "I would like to refer to the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on relations between the United Nations and civil society, including parliamentarians and the private sector.
>
> "Perhaps I might begin by stating the obvious: parliaments are entirely different from civil society and do not belong in that category. I believe that the need for a wholly distinct approach to parliaments was also recognized by the Panel members after they began their work, in particular when they resorted to the more traditional term of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as it appears in Article 71 of the Charter, thereby clearly excluding parliaments.
>
> "That being said, I nonetheless welcome the scope and the vision of the Cardoso report. We believe that it is right in drawing attention to the need for the United Nations to consolidate and expand its working relationship with the international parliamentary community. There are three reasons for this, on which I will elaborate in the course of these remarks. The first is that the democracy deficit currently facing the United Nations has to be resolved. The second is the need to mobilize better awareness and more active support by national parliaments for the work of the United Nations. Finally, we believe that it is imperative that the voice of the people, expressed through their elected representatives, be heard more clearly in this important body.

"That is an idea that we in the IPU have been advocating for many years, and we have deployed significant efforts with a view to its realization, both within the Organization and in our respective national parliaments. Indeed, that is at the very heart of our mandate. The IPU marshals substantive parliamentary support for international action, and, as the world organization of parliaments, the IPU is the only global institution that can mobilize parliamentary action worldwide. We do so by being in constant contact with all parliaments.

"Four years ago, the Millennium Declaration recognized the need to strengthen further the cooperation between parliaments and the United Nations and recommended that that be done through the IPU. That was a result of the first Conference of Speakers of Parliaments convened by the IPU, which had taken place here in New York just a few days earlier. During that Conference speakers had pledged their commitment and support to the United Nations, particularly for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, and voiced their determination to strengthen the parliamentary dimension of international cooperation, with the United Nations at its core.

"In making that recommendation in the Millennium Declaration, the heads of State or Government recognized the role that the IPU can play. Moreover, they did not seek to change the nature of the United Nations, which is, and will remain, an intergovernmental organization, and they recognized that parliamentary action in relation to international cooperation must first and foremost take place at the national level.

"Turning once again to the Cardoso Panel, the report is a cause of concern to parliaments and their international organization — the IPU — because it suggests that the United Nations, an intergovernmental institution, should create its own inter-parliamentary structures. That would obviously result in duplication of the work currently undertaken by the IPU. But, more important, it would run contrary to the principle of separation of powers between the legislative and the executive branch of government. To put it simply, the IPU strongly believes that it is wholly inappropriate for the United Nations to consider organizing the work of members of parliament. If the goal is, indeed, to bridge the democratic deficit and bring the voice of the people closer to the United Nations, then it is also important that we get this right.

"For all of those reasons, parliamentary leaders have taken it upon themselves to consult widely in their capitals and within their parliaments on how best to bring forward the substantive recommendations of the Cardoso Panel. In practical terms, they intend to channel these consultations through the preparatory mechanism for the Second World Conference of Speakers of Parliaments, which they hope to convene here at United Nations Headquarters in early September next year, before the opening of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly. They will thus be in a position to deliver to the Assembly the conclusions of their consultations in the second half of next year.

"The Second World Conference of Speakers will focus on multilateralism and the role of the United Nations. It will address issues like cooperation between parliaments and the United Nations, but it will also make a progress report on parliamentary contributions to meeting the Millennium Development Goals. Furthermore, it will seek to develop a reference framework on parliamentary democracy. As always, we are working closely with the Secretariat to make this a successful joint event.

"We have carefully examined the report by the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Cardoso Panel's recommendations, and we look forward to working closely with him and with the United Nations, with a view to shaping effective mechanisms for stronger interaction between parliaments and the United Nations.

"The 111th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union just completed its proceedings in Geneva last week. On that occasion, we met with the Executive Director of UNAIDS, with whom we have developed a close working relationship over the years, aimed at building a global focus for the work of parliamentarians on AIDS. Together, we have formulated and implemented a series of sound projects, including the publication of a Guide for

Parliamentarians that focuses exclusively on developing adequate legislation in the fight against HIV/AIDS, good practices and recommended policies. New projects are in the making for the future, including setting up a special select parliamentary committee on HIV/AIDS at the global level.

"Looking towards the high-level meetings coming in 2005 and 2006, we have agreed, together with Dr. Peter Piot, to devote particular attention to the question of the role and responsibility of parliaments in the fight against HIV/AIDS on the occasion of the forthcoming IPU Assembly, which will take place in Manila in April next year. The ensuing results, conclusions and recommendations will then be fed into the United Nations intergovernmental process, and certainly will be brought to your attention here in the United Nations General Assembly.

"In conclusion, Sir, please allow me to thank you for your country's leadership, not just here in the United Nations, but also within the Inter-Parliamentary Union, where Gabon has been an active and valued member for many years. The Speaker of the Parliament of Gabon will be travelling to New York in just two weeks' time to participate in our annual Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations. We ourselves will then be travelling to Libreville in May 2005 for the third and final preparatory meeting of the Parliamentary Summit next year. As always, we know we will be able to count on your country's full support."

The President (*spoke in French*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate on these agenda items.

With that last statement, we have, therefore, concluded this joint debate on agenda item 52 on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, and agenda item 54 on the strengthening of the United Nations system. These items, as the Assembly is aware, are by no means new. They have been on our agenda for several years now. We have already devoted a dozen resolutions to them, including resolutions 58/126 and 58/316 of the fifty-eighth session, which have been referred to by all of the speakers.

The report of the Secretary-General on civil society, which was introduced by the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Louise Fréchette, put forward specific proposals that require our careful consideration.

From these declarations, we note the following critical points regarding revitalization. The statements were part of the continuation of the general debate, during which delegations had specifically brought up this issue. In addition to a general reference to the importance of the role of the General Assembly and its central nature in the global context of the reform of the United Nations, two specific aspects emerged from the debate – namely, the implementation of resolutions already adopted and the continuation of consideration of outstanding questions.

Regarding the implementation of resolutions, all the delegations asked for the implementation of the provisions of resolution 58/126 and 58/316 to be actively continued. The meetings between the Presidents of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council were rigorously supported.

On the same subject, I would like to recall at this time, as I had already emphasized at the end of the general debate, that the three Presidents had a meeting on 30 September. Other meetings are already planned.

The outstanding questions deal, above all, with rationalization of the agenda and a reduction of documentation. Delegations requested that additional efforts be made to rationalize the agenda of the plenary and of the Main Committees, an agenda where the categories coincide with the priorities laid down by the Organization in its medium-term plan. In this respect, emphasis was placed on the central role that must be played by the Bureau. It was also stressed that the organization of the agenda should first be the subject of an evaluation by the plenary at the sixty-first session. Several delegations said that there was a need to see that this organization of the agenda did not impact on the Assembly's capacity to carry out its work. Delegations also emphasized that the rationalization of the agenda should be accompanied by a reduction in the volume of documentation and the number of resolutions. It was, however, emphasized that such a reduction should not negatively impact the information needed by Member States for consideration of various items.

Beyond revitalization of the work of the Assembly, the debate also underscored the need for strengthening of the Economic and Social Council,

reform of the Security Council and enhancement of the role of the United Nations in general.

Regarding relations between the United Nations and civil society contained in the Cardoso report, it was recognized that the contributions of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are important for the work of the United Nations. However, it is clear from discussions that the modalities for their participation and their contribution to the work of the General Assembly still need to be considered.

Several delegations advocated a simplification of the system of accreditation for representatives of civil society.

A large number of delegations welcomed the existing cooperation on the local level between Governments and civil society on development issues. The hope was expressed that this cooperation would also be strengthened with the United Nations. However, several delegations advocated limiting such cooperation to the level of the Economic and Social Council. Moreover, numerous delegations supported the suggestion for the creation of a special fund, which was put forward by the Secretary-General, to strengthen the participation of NGOs from developing countries.

At the end of this debate, I now propose, with the Bureau, to commence the broadest possible consultations with Member States to continue the revitalization process, aimed at strengthening the role and the authority of the General Assembly.

I will keep the Assembly informed regarding the timetable and the steps I shall be taking in this respect.

The General Assembly has thus concluded the present stage of consideration of agenda items 52 and 54.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.

United Nations A/59/PV.21

General Assembly

Official Records

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President: Mr. Ping ..... (Gabon)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 10

Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/59/1)

The President (*spoke in French*): Members will recall that the Secretary-General presented his report to the General Assembly at the 3rd plenary meeting, on 21 September 2004.

Mr. Van den Berg (Netherlands): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The candidate countries Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and Croatia, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro align themselves with this statement.

The European Union wishes to express its appreciation for the concise but comprehensive report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization. The European Union shares the view of the Secretary-General that the United Nations has had an extraordinary and challenging year, with ongoing and newly developing crisis situations. Clearly, some of the challenges have been around for longer periods of time, but in several cases we are making slower progress in addressing them than the situation calls for. The results, in several cases, have been mixed at best.

The political crises we are facing and the need to meet the increasing demands for peacekeeping and humanitarian emergencies can seem overwhelming, but it is essential that we meet the challenges. Several conclusions are clear. Conflict prevention and post-conflict situations need to be handled in a better manner. Our joint efforts in combating terrorists and the proliferation of weapons, in particular weapons of mass destruction, must be increased. We must all work for worldwide respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law. We should not cease in our efforts to fight HIV/AIDS and other major diseases, fight poverty and the growing gap between rich and poor, both between and within countries, stop global crime and redress environmental degradation.

In the view of the European Union (EU), the United Nations is uniquely placed to provide the framework for international cooperation. It has no substitute in the international community. However, in order to be more effective, the Organization has to adapt to changing conditions. This requires, most of all, an open and constructive attitude by its Member States and a willingness to support change. But it also requires an Organization that focuses on priorities, intensifies its internal cooperation, coordination and coherence, improves its human resources management and strengthens its budget process and its accountability. The EU gave its views on these matters during the joint plenary debate last Monday.

The EU itself is strongly committed to supporting these efforts to strengthen the United Nations. It has

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committed itself to effective multilateralism as a central element of its external action. We believe that none of the current international challenges can be tackled in an isolated manner or unilaterally. We understand that our security and development are inextricably linked to the security and development of others.

Our objective is the development of a stronger international community, well-functioning international institutions and a rule-based international order, within the fundamental framework of the United Nations Charter. The United Nations is, in our view, at the core of such an international order.

In this regard, we must intensify our efforts to reach a consensus on changes in the institutional architecture, in order to assure that our objectives in the areas of peace, security, development and good governance are met. We considered the establishment by the Secretary-General of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change to be of the highest importance. We look forward to discussing the Panel's report and the Secretary-General's recommendations thereon in a constructive manner. We also look forward to the report by the Millennium Project and to discussing the follow-up to the report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization and the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations.

The EU considers the high-level event at the beginning of the 2005 General Assembly a logical culmination of this process. We see this event as a key opportunity to agree on or reaffirm fundamental principles and to agree on urgent measures to achieve all the commitments of the Millennium Declaration, including the Millennium Development Goals. The event should encourage progress in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits and conferences in the economic and social areas, including, in particular, the follow-up to the Monterrey and Johannesburg summits. The EU will present more detailed views on this subject during our debate in November on the follow-up to the Millennium Summit and the follow-up to the implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields.

The EU welcomes the continued trend towards strengthening partnerships between the United Nations and regional organizations in the shared pursuit of peace, stability and development in the various regions. In particular, we wish to commend and support the enhanced role of the African Union and its peace and security structures in the stabilization of regional crises. The EU is aware of its responsibility as a regional organization in the areas of conflict prevention, crisis management and peacekeeping operations. The September 2003 Joint Declaration on United Nations-European Union Cooperation in Crisis Management provided a framework for both organizations to develop practical avenues for expanded cooperation. A joint consultative mechanism consisting of a United Nations-EU steering committee on crisis management activities oversees the implementation of this Declaration.

Finally, the Secretary-General mentions in his report the crucial role that the United Nations has played in the establishment of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the arrangements for the commencement of its operations. Without the United Nations, the ICC would not exist. The purposes of the United Nations and of the ICC are mutually reinforcing, and close cooperation between the United Nations and the ICC should now proceed, on the basis of the relationship agreement that entered into force on 3 October 2004. More than half of the United Nations Members — 97 States — have now become parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and we encourage an even wider ratification. The ICC is now operational, with two situations being investigated by the prosecutor. The EU recalls its continuous support for the ICC and the efforts of the international community to fight impunity. We are firmly convinced that the Rome Statute provides all the necessary safeguards against the use of the Court for politically motivated purposes, and are committed to preserving the integrity of the Statute.

Let me conclude by applauding the Secretary-General and his staff for the work they have undertaken in the past year, often under extremely difficult circumstances, and for always acting within the framework of the principles and purposes of the Charter. Allow me to remind Member States that we will have to take decisions on a potentially major overhaul of the safety and security policies of the Organization, both for Headquarters and in the field. The EU looks forward to receiving the Secretariat's report on safety and security, and will support appropriate improvements in security measures. Let me

assure you that the European Union is, and will be, on your side.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Canada, who is also speaking on behalf of Australia and New Zealand.

Mr. Laurin (Canada) (*spoke in French*): I am pleased to address the Assembly on behalf of New Zealand, Australia and Canada under agenda item 10, the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization. Allow me to take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. President, on behalf of our three delegations, on your election as President of the fifty-ninth session, and to assure you of our constructive cooperation and support in the year ahead. We also offer our congratulations to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report, which in so many ways reflects the quality of his own leadership, highlights both the Organization's successes and its shortcomings over the past year and underlines the challenges we face. These are challenges, which, in our view, are unprecedented in their scope and in their potential gravity.

(*spoke in English*)

For those of us convinced that a more just and secure world requires effective multilateral institutions, these are times of serious concern, including the concern that, as we speak here today, human tragedies continue to unfold, most notably in the Darfur region of Sudan. Our peoples increasingly question why the collective international will embodied in this Organization seems so tenuous in responding, and why we seemingly permit the mantra of sovereignty to shelter the abusers rather than the abused, including women and children, who are often the first and most helpless victims.

We have jointly spoken previously in this Hall of the responsibility of Governments to protect the people in their charge and of the obligation of the international community to exercise that responsibility on a temporary basis whenever that most fundamental of obligations is egregiously ignored.

We have many means at our disposal to prevent, deter and respond to crimes against our common humanity and to bring the perpetrators to account for their actions. The International Criminal Court, for example, has an essential role to play in facilitating justice and accountability, particularly through the principle of complementarity, which is an essential feature of the Court's statute.

We live in perilous times. Armed conflict continues to take innocent lives in the Middle East, Africa and elsewhere. The threat of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction hangs over us. Terrorist acts continue unabated. It need not be so. We must do more in this Organization by way of an effective response. We note with satisfaction in this regard the efforts being made to strengthen the Counter-Terrorism Committee.

In countries with their own tragic histories — Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, Liberia, East Timor, and elsewhere — the United Nations is contributing significantly to the difficult but tentatively promising process of economic recovery and reconciliation. The United Nations can and should play a similar role in Iraq to fulfil its mandate under Security Council resolution 1546 (2004), most critically through supporting Iraqis in the holding of elections on schedule, no later than 31 January 2005.

We also take this opportunity to recognize once again the military, civilian police and civilian personnel in peacekeeping operations, both as deployed in traditional blue-helmet missions — in greater numbers than for many years — and in national uniform serving in missions authorized by the Security Council. We honour those among them who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the cause of peace.

As the Secretary-General's report on the work of the Organization notes, last year this Assembly, for the first time, adopted a historic resolution on the prevention of armed conflict (resolution 57/337), based on the Secretary-General's earlier report on the subject (A/55/985 and Corr.1). It also endorsed the integration of conflict prevention across the funds and programmes of the United Nations system. We applaud the Secretary-General for his leadership in taking this process forward.

We recognize, however, that threats take many forms, and for those whose nations are mired in poverty, whose populations must live and die with the HIV/AIDS pandemic on a scale others among us cannot imagine or which have suffered cataclysmic natural disasters, national security has connotations no less serious even if the threats they face are different in character.

Our three Governments are united in our commitment to a broad concept of security in which the security of the individual human being is paramount and must be addressed in a number of dimensions. In that respect, we share the report's hope for greater progress in attaining the Millennium Development Goals. We urge all Member States to contribute to the efforts described in the report to stem the flow of small arms and light weapons. We strongly endorse the call in the report for those States that have not ratified the Ottawa Convention to do so promptly and for all States to participate in the first review conference of the Convention, to be held in Nairobi a month from now. And we are among those who share the disquiet noted in the report regarding the dysfunctional elements of the United Nations human rights machinery, including the continued election to the Commission on Human Rights of Governments that are themselves accused of gross human rights violations.

Working to enhance our security in all these respects are the civilian personnel of this Organization and those associated with it, in whose daily lives the element of risk is increasing. We appreciate the measures taken thus far to deal with this serious issue, particularly following the events in Baghdad last year, which took the lives of so many of this Organization's very finest. As the Assembly moves to implement further security enhancement measures — and we know they will not be cheap — we owe it to those we have lost and to those who follow in their footsteps, to do our utmost to protect them and their families.

If there is a common theme in all of this it is that of unprecedented change and challenge. We must face the fact that across our world today the United Nations is seen by many to be falling short of its potential and its purpose. The report, to its credit, does not shrink from this reality, while underlining that without the commitment and support of Member States that potential cannot be realized.

The process of administrative and budgetary reform must continue and be accelerated. The United Nations must reach out as never before to civil society, including the private sector, as underlined in the United Nations Development Programme report entitled "Unleashing entrepreneurship: making business work for the poor", and the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society relations (A/58/817 and Corr.1).

Perhaps most immediately critical, however, in terms of the fork in the road of which the Secretary-General spoke a year ago, will be our collective response to the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. Its recommendations and the Secretary General's response to them promise to be of historic significance. So too should be our collective response. If this Organization is to remain relevant, it cannot be more of the same. We must be prepared to make difficult compromises and take bold decisions. If we do not, history will move this Organization to its margins. We cannot permit that to happen.

Mr. Baali (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Following the general debate of the last two weeks, today's meeting, on the consideration of the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/59/1), provides a further opportunity to debate issues of great importance and concern to the international community, as well as an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to the central and irreplaceable role of the United Nations in meeting the objectives for peace and development, as set out in the Millennium Declaration.

An attentive reading of the report of the Secretary-General and a lucid analysis of his assessment of the achievements of the Organization over the past year lead us once again to the following conclusion: the pressing need for a strong and effective Organization better able to serve the interests of States and people in this new era marked by increased globalization, which in turn leads to the globalization of the concept of security.

Global problems today are of such a scale and complexity that they can be solved only through collective action founded on the values of solidarity, universality and multilateralism as embodied by the United Nations.

The United Nations brings together almost all countries of the world, and its activities impact on almost all aspects of human activity. Those characteristics have made it a unique and ideal forum for the exchange of information, the holding of negotiations and the elaboration of standards and policies, the expression of aspirations, the orientation of the conduct of States and other partners and the implementation of collective action plans.

Member States must do more than simply reaffirm the relevance of the United Nations. They

must also ensure that the Organization performs its tasks as effectively as possible and act as a catalyst of change in a rapidly changing world that is facing new challenges.

In that context, Algeria hopes that the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change will be able to make innovative and consistent recommendations founded on a stringent analysis of global threats to international peace and security and on an in-depth examination of the institutions and mechanisms existing within the United Nations. Therefore, Member States must carry out an objective examination, without complacency, of issues related to the reform of the United Nations in the light of the conclusions and recommendations to be issued by the High-level Panel, and must work constructively to implement the radical reforms that our Organization needs.

While pursuing those ambitious endeavours, Member States must also bear in mind that the great strength of this Organization lies in its legitimacy, which in turn is rooted in the fundamental principles of international law as accepted by all States and expressed by the international community as a whole. It is from that legitimacy that the United Nations is able to draw the authority required in order to ensure that its decisions are respected.

The United Nations is more than a simple tool, for beyond the varied fields of action in which it is engaged, its aim, as reflected in the Charter, is to transform relations among States, to manage global affairs and to respond to the needs and hopes of the world's peoples. That immense task entrusted to us by the founders of the United Nations some 60 years ago will be fulfilled only if we work together in a pragmatic and clear-headed manner. At the same time, we must show creativity and daring by helping the United Nations to do its best to adapt to the global realities of the twenty-first century.

My delegation would like to comment briefly on some salient aspects of the report of the Secretary-General, bearing in mind that in coming weeks we will be addressing further important issues on our agenda.

With regard to peace and international security, the report of the Secretary-General once again highlights the fact that there are ongoing violent conflicts worldwide, which have cost millions of lives among civilians, have had an impact on neighbouring countries and have endangered international peace and security.

Africa has done a great deal to resolve the crises that face it. But it continues to be the continent most sorely afflicted by conflict, as can be seen from the agenda of the Security Council. While we welcome the positive developments in the situations in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau and in the Comoros, other nascent and full-blown conflicts require our attention.

In the areas of preventing conflict, restoring peace, peace-building and peacekeeping, combating poverty and illness and promoting development, cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations is more necessary than ever before. Therefore, cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union and subregional organizations on the African continent must address the whole range of serious issues facing Africa.

In that context, Algeria particularly welcomes the cooperation of the United Nations in developing and implementing guidelines for setting up the structures of the African Union's Peace and Security Council, in particular by helping to establish the African Standby Force and the Union's Military Staff Committee. Through the African Union, the subregional bodies and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), Africa is now able to draw upon frameworks and mechanisms that are better suited to the kinds of problems that we must solve.

With regard to combating the AIDS pandemic, my delegation agrees with the Secretary-General that "[t]he fight against HIV/AIDS requires strong global leadership, effective global partnership and sustained global action" (*A/59/1, para. 4*). Algeria welcomes the initiative launched by the World Health Organization and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, which aims to provide antiretroviral treatment for some 3 million individuals suffering from AIDS by the end of 2005. This is an initiative which will make possible the survival of at least half of the 6 million individuals suffering from AIDS in developing countries, the majority of whom dwell in Africa.

The United Nations must continue its action in the fight against terrorism. We are well aware of the persistent threat that terrorism poses to peace and international security. In this respect, we share the view of the Secretary-General that we need to combat terrorism while at the same time ensuring full respect

for fundamental freedoms and human dignity. But we must also emphasize that in resolution 58/174 the General Assembly recalled the reference in last year's report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration to the fact that "[T]errorism itself is a violation of fundamental human rights and must be combated as such" (*A/58/323, para. 28*).

The report of the Secretary-General furthermore emphasizes the need for increased international cooperation to combat that scourge using existing mechanisms.

Among the counter-terrorism activities carried out during the past year, the Secretary-General recalls Security Council resolution 1535 (2004) on the revitalization of the Counter-Terrorism Committee in order to strengthen its effectiveness while enhancing all the Committee's activities to prevent and suppress terrorism.

The report also emphasizes that the Vienna-based United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, working in close coordination with the Counter-Terrorism Committee, has provided technical assistance to more than 70 countries in connection with the ratification and implementation of the 12 universal anti-terrorism conventions and the implementation of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001). It notes also that in 2004 the connection between terrorism and organized crime was discussed by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination.

My delegation welcomes all of these actions, which demonstrate the determination of the international community to combat this scourge. At the same time, however, we feel that it is only through the development of a comprehensive anti-terrorism convention that we will be able to put an end to these dangerous movements, which tend to lead to confusion between the legitimate liberation struggle of peoples and the terrible phenomenon of terrorism.

Mr. Sychov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The Republic of Belarus views the past year as having been a period of difficult and intensive work by our Organization, its agencies and its institutions. The Secretary-General has repeatedly drawn our attention to the fact that the range of challenges facing the Organization is constantly expanding, and that their complexity and their importance for the international community are constantly increasing.

We believe in the Organization's ability to considerably strengthen its lead coordinating role in mobilizing the efforts of Member States when confronting new challenges and threats. In that regard, we welcomed the Security Council's adoption of its resolution 1535 (2004), which formed the basis for the creation of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, which includes a special office for providing technical assistance to States. We hope that these structural reforms will help strengthen the operational coordination between the Counter-Terrorism Committee and Governments, thus improving the impact of the Committee's work.

An important step in the work of the Organization was the Security Council's adoption of its resolution 1540 (2004), by which we are taking a new approach to the question of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction by linking that problem to the growth in the terrorist threat. For that resolution to be successfully implemented, in is important that States submit comprehensive national reports. For our part, the Government of the Republic of Belarus intends to submit our national report on time.

The Secretary-General has drawn our attention to the surge in the number of local conflicts and the increased demand for United Nations peacekeeping operations. The setting up of new operations and the increased scale of current ones require increased activity by the relevant Secretariat units and place a heavy burden on the financial resources of the Organization.

In our view, we should tackle this situation in two ways. First, there is a need to enhance the participation of interested regional associations and organizations which can effectively organize and carry out peacekeeping activities. In particular, we welcome the African Union's desire to take an increasingly active role in peacekeeping operations, specifically in Africa. However, the United Nations should coordinate and direct peacekeeping activities carried out by regional organizations

Secondly, it is important to organize, with the help of the most economically powerful States, large-scale training of potential peacekeepers for interested regional organizations and developing countries. In that context, it is important to note that during the general debate, a number of far-reaching initiatives were proposed for a rational, pragmatic approach.

My country has great military and civilian potential and is interested in expanding its participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations. It is taking practical steps to establish a legal basis for such participation and for training peacekeeping personnel.

The Government of the Republic of Belarus supports strengthening the role of the United Nations in the political reconstruction of Iraq and Afghanistan in the light of the preparations for national parliamentary and presidential elections in those war-affected countries. The United Nations has great experience in organizing democratic elections in post-conflict countries and can make a valuable contribution to the post-war reconstruction of Iraq and Afghanistan.

We note with regret that the United Nations has not yet been able to make a significant impact on the process of resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and implementing the road map. In that connection, we call on the Secretary-General to intensify his mediation activities in that area in order to resolve the most problematic issues between the parties to the conflict.

We welcome the Organization's work in protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, and we welcome the work of the Commission on Human Rights. In that context, we can only agree with the Secretary-General with respect to the high level of politicization of the Commission's debates and the fact that a selective approach is taken in considering situations involving human rights violations. The Republic of Belarus has repeatedly stated its position of principle on this issue. We share and support the desire of most members of the Commission to avoid unnecessary politicization of the Commission's work so that it can carry out its functions as the principal human rights body of the United Nations, able to respond promptly, effectively and even-handedly to the new challenges with respect to massive violations of human rights. Only by adopting a constructive approach and renouncing double standards can the global human rights situation be improved.

Our delegation commends the efforts of the United Nations to promote the Millennium Development Goals and to incorporate them into the activities of the main bodies of the United Nations system. We hope that the General Assembly's high-level meeting in 2005 will conduct a thorough analysis of the five years of implementation of the Millennium Declaration and of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences in the economic, social and related fields.

At the same time, we are concerned that in implementing the Millennium Development Goals, priority attention has gone to the social and humanitarian goals, while economic issues have been given lower priority. Without denying the urgent importance of resolving social and humanitarian problems, we are convinced that Governments, Member States and international organizations in the United Nations system need to step up their efforts to meet the economic challenges set out in the Millennium Declaration. Creating favourable conditions for sustainable development is vital to eradicating hunger and poverty, ensuring respect for human rights, mitigating the threat of terrorism, preventing armed conflict and eliminating dangerous epidemics.

It will be impossible to overcome those challenges without a revitalized, institutionally strong and effectively functioning United Nations whose activities are founded on the principles of multilateralism in international relations, the rule of law in international affairs and collective and fair solutions to global problems. In that regard, the delegation of Belarus calls upon Member States to adopt a well-balanced approach to the forthcoming report of the Secretary-General's recently established High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change.

We express our readiness to cooperate closely with other delegations to find common approaches to the major problems related to establishing a new international order.

Mr. Aboul Atta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, my delegation thanks the Secretary-General and the Secretariat for their efforts towards achieving the Organization's objectives as defined in the Charter and by the resolutions adopted by Member States.

The report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/59/1) discusses very important issues deserving of our attention. We wish to comment on them, but time constraints oblige us to concentrate on just a few. The Egyptian position on all issues covered in the report will be expressed during the discussion of the individual items of the agenda of the fifty-ninth session in plenary meetings and in the Main Committees. Today, I shall touch on the following issues.

First, even a cursory glance at the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory and the report's discussion of the issue reflect a single truth. Despite the constant efforts of the international community and parties in the region, notably including Egypt, the humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory has worsened, and the resolutions adopted are not being implemented. There are occasional glimmers of hope that agreements concluded and initiatives adopted will be implemented, but realities on the ground undermine that hope. That is so because the occupying Power is not committed to the principles of international law. It has not heeded the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and ignores the Fourth Geneva Convention and the provisions of international humanitarian law.

Secondly, we note that the Organization has stepped up its peace-building activities. That has led to administrative difficulties for the Organization. It is important to develop a rapid response capability for dealing with crises as soon as they emerge. We need an integrated strategy, including all related elements and clear timelines, for the various phases of peacekeeping, peace-building and capacity-building in countries in conflict. That would enable Member States to anticipate the human and material resources needed for such operations.

That issue is very important because it directly affects the safety and security of United Nations personnel. And that in turn is important to us because United Nations personnel is a treasure valued by all. We believe that we cannot provide security if we spend enormous amounts of money without having a clear plan rooted in a solid culture of security, with an administrative approach including a clear chain of command, specific responsibilities, expertise and competencies ensuring high-level performance in this very important field. Therefore, we must undertake a comprehensive review of the Organization's capabilities and expertise in this area, making use of the conclusions of the many committees that have been created, the expert studies done and the reviews carried out. That approach was endorsed by the General Assembly at its previous session and constitutes a very important contribution that must be taken into consideration.

Thirdly, terrorism is still a threat to international peace and security and that requires more efficient action by the international community. Here we would like to emphasize the important role undertaken by all of the multilateral international bodies — in particular the Security Council and the General Assembly — on the basis of complementarity rather than competition and within the context of emphasizing the responsibilities entrusted to each of them in accordance with the Charter.

Fourthly, we welcome the efforts made by the Special Adviser on Africa and his Office in presenting the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and mobilizing international support and efforts to bring about its objectives. We would like to underline the importance of supporting that office with the human and material resources needed to achieve its objective.

We have noted that, despite the efforts made by the Organization, concrete steps to implement specific programmes and projects that have been set up with within the context of NEPAD, have not received the necessary priority within the framework of development policies for Africa, by donor States.

We look forward to revitalizing the interaction between the United Nations, as manifested by the Office of the Special Adviser, and the many initiatives made individually, or by many other bodies, in order to bring about efficient and effective projects and programmes in the areas of social, environmental and economic development, and peace and security.

Therefore, we should try to avoid double standards and diversion of international interest so we can bring about development in Africa as set forth in the NEPAD Initiative.

Fifthly and finally, we would like to make the following preliminary remarks concerning the strengthening of the United Nations. First, the proposed programme budget of the Organization must reflect the priorities in the medium term plan, as they are more comprehensive. We should provide the necessary funding for all of the activities endorsed by the Member States.

Secondly, developing the work of the Organization is a matter that should be left to the leadership of the Member States and to what they agree on. It should be done with a clear view of the responsibilities of those who are involved.

Thirdly, the concepts of transparency, accountability and assessment must be supported

within the Organization at all levels in order to guarantee the work efficiency to which all of us at the United Nations look forward.

Mr. Neil (Jamaica): In his report on the work of the Organization the Secretary General described the past year as an extraordinarily challenging year for the United Nations. Our delegation agrees that there have been great difficulties and in the circumstances we should congratulate the Secretary-General for his stewardship and for guiding the Organization in the implementation of its various mandates. Although there have been mixed results, the overall picture is one of an organization that has remained engaged and active where the needs have arisen.

Prevailing conditions have not been helpful for the maintenance of peace and security. The cycle of war and violence regrettably continued unabated, damaging the prospects for stability and peace, while doctrines promoting military power and the use of force, and the upsurge of terrorism have served to undermine the fabric of international security.

The conflicts in the Middle East and in Africa have been the most prominent. In Iraq the role of the United Nations has been limited despite the adoption of Security Council resolution 1546 (2004). The Secretary-General has been justifiably cautious, as the prevailing security situation has made it too risky for a more ambitious programme for United Nations involvement. The major responsibility will lie in the hands of the coalition forces to rebuild Iraq. In the meantime, efforts will have to be concentrated on establishing a political framework for ensuring stability and security. Until that is achieved, it is difficult to see how the United Nations role could be enlarged.

In the Middle East the situation has continued to deteriorate over the past year, and events have confirmed the need for a more even-handed approach in order to advance a settlement based on justice and legality. Judging from the events of the past year, the Quartet has not been fulfilling that role or exercising the influence that is needed.

In Africa there have been some positive developments over the year but the recent events in Darfur in the Sudan have led to a new crisis. We commend the Secretary-General for his efforts and welcome the collaboration that has developed with the African Union in seeking a solution.

In other areas of tension and conflict, it is quite evident that the United Nations has been active and we congratulate the Secretary-General for his quiet diplomacy, which has helped to avoid the outbreak of hostilities, promote reconciliation and encourage the peaceful settlement of disputes.

The work of the United Nations peacekeepers and peace-builders has continued to multiply, with a total of 16 missions now in the field with the addition of those in Haiti, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and Burundi. Obviously, the growing number and scale of the operations pose a challenge to the Organization's capacity to provide sustainable support for such operations.

What is of utmost importance is to ensure that there is an exit strategy that can be implemented without risking a relapse into conflict. National recovery and assistance in strengthening the social and economic underpinnings of war-torn societies continue to be necessary to ensure the durability of peace and stability.

We are still hopeful about the situation in Haiti, but anxieties have increased because of the unsettled security situation, political uncertainties and setbacks caused by the hurricane disaster.

We believe that greater urgency should be introduced in mobilizing the resources from the $1.3 billion package of pledges to go towards political, social and economic needs. As far as the political situation is concerned, while we do not fully share the Secretary-General's assessment in paragraph 58 of his report, we support his insistence on the need for the United Nations to remain engaged for the long term, both politically and financially.

In the field of disarmament, there is a clear need to revitalize the Conference on Disarmament, whose work has been stalled in an atmosphere of weakened political commitment to disarmament efforts. The growth of military expenditures and the promotion of militarism have undermined the political will to move forward. That is a contributing factor to proliferation, as a non-proliferation regime can only succeed where mutual and reciprocal obligations are honoured and where the principle of non-discrimination is upheld.

The dangers of proliferation are increased by the upsurge of terrorism in recent times. We all have an obligation to confront that challenge but too much

emphasis is being placed on military operations. Our view is that a successful campaign requires a more serious effort to eliminate the root causes of terrorism. Conditions of injustice, deprivation or oppression, which are conducive to the development of extremist ideas and activities, require our full attention.

The Secretary-General, in his statement on 28 September, rightly emphasized the importance of the rule of law, which is increasingly at risk around the world. At the national level, it is an important aspect of the stability and survival of States and, similarly, at the level of world order. The Organization has created an important body of norms and laws and it is the duty of all States to uphold legality in international relations. This applies to all.

The United Nations should never accept or tolerate double standards, selectivity or discriminatory practices. They violate principles of justice and equal rights, which is an important basis for cooperation and stability in the international system.

In the area of humanitarian commitments, the work and achievements of the United Nations over the past year have been solid and commendable. The report amply shows how much has been accomplished in relation to assistance to refugees and relief during humanitarian emergencies.

Obviously, not all needs have been met. As the Secretary-General tells us, the Organization has been operating in a situation of underfunding, which has persisted all year. We are disappointed to learn that, both in absolute and proportional terms, funding was lower than for the same period in 2003. We support the Secretary-General's initiatives to promote and secure greater resources, so that hardship and suffering can be reduced, especially among the vulnerable groups.

The work of the United Nations in promoting development cooperation is of particular importance for developing countries. The work done by the various agencies in operational activities has been an important source of development assistance and we urge that as much of the resources as is available be deployed in implementing concrete projects and programmes. It is important to avoid excessive preoccupation with designing frameworks and integrated systems, which only increase the bureaucratic component and reduce the resources available for programme delivery.

From reading the report, we feel that there is need to give greater impetus to efforts for sustainable development and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Regrettably, there are signs that those objectives may increasingly be overshadowed by the preoccupation with terrorism and security issues.

We particularly hope that the United Nations will give special attention to the special needs of the disadvantaged, to the least development countries, the landlocked States and the small island developing States. In the case of the latter, the review of the Barbados Programme of Action, which has been postponed until next year, should receive the full support of the Secretariat in ensuring that the Conference and its outcome will achieve positive results.

In general, Jamaica believes that, in the area of international economic cooperation, more needs to be done by the United Nations to coordinate international policies. There is also the need for institutional strengthening for that purpose. A democratic forum is needed to coordinate international policies relating to finance, trade and technology. It should be capable of applying remedies to correct global imbalances and of responding to crises. We should regard that as an important part of what should be the outcome of the Summit during the sixtieth session of the General Assembly.

The international legal order has continued to evolve in a positive direction with the creation of new legal regimes, but the problem of gaining universality has dampened some of its success. The instruments of international cooperation are important in strengthening multilateralism and all should join in.

In the case of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the international Tribunals, it is important for the integrity of the system that perpetrators of war crimes are not sought only in developing countries. To have credibility the system should apply to everyone and it is weakened if exceptions are allowed. That principle applies even more broadly to the field of human rights protection and it would be unfortunate for the United Nations system if the same standards did not apply to all.

Regrettably, cases have arisen leading to charges of selective treatment and double standards. That is damaging to the image of the United Nations. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

and the Commission on Human Rights should be vigilant in maintaining uniform standards and equal requirements and should avoid politicization, which weakens the influence of the United Nations in the promotion of human rights.

In relation to the management of the Secretariat, we commend the Secretary-General for the reforms implemented since 1997, which have progressed reasonably well with the introduction of management practices to improve the effectiveness of the system.

The two-year budget cycle is now in place and we are looking forward to receiving the first proposed strategic framework for the 2006-2007 biennium, which is expected to be submitted sometime during this session.

We understand that the Secretary-General is seeking a larger and more substantive programme of reform based on the recommendations of the Panel of Eminent Persons, which is expected to be submitted to the Secretary-General this year. We hope the report will form a firm basis for reform and revitalization of the United Nations to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Jamaica will be ready to consider the report and its recommendations and we will make our contribution when it is put before us.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): The Pakistani delegation thanks the Secretary-General for his report on the work of the Organization. The Secretary-General has rightly described the past year as extraordinarily challenging for the United Nations. Pakistan has remained an active partner of the United Nations in its efforts to build a better future.

Over the past 12 months, international peace and security continued to be affected by old and new threats, internal conflicts, regional disputes, foreign occupation and terrorism. Disarmament remained stalled, while non-proliferation efforts continued to be marked by discriminatory approaches.

Humanitarian emergencies erupted, and poverty, hunger and infectious diseases claimed millions of lives. Along with deepening power asymmetries, wealth inequalities and socio-economic disparities all continued to be accentuated.

Pakistan fully shares the view that the instrument of multilateralism and the values of interdependence and shared responsibility are fundamental to achieving selective solutions to our common problems. Pakistan appreciates the efforts deployed by the United Nations and the Secretary-General in pursuit of international peace and security, through peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace-building.

The presence of the United Nations, particularly in Africa, is showing results, as situations in various countries stabilize. The challenges continue, of course, and require constructive engagement, rather than coercive strategies. The process is greatly helped as African leadership and institutions become increasingly involved in seeking African solutions to African problems.

The past year witnessed an unprecedented surge in the demand for United Nations peacekeeping operations. As the largest contributor to United Nations peacekeeping, Pakistan is proud of the contribution it is making to the maintenance of international peace and security. We agree with the Secretary-General that "[t]oday's operations will not succeed without the sustained political support and commitment of the Member States — and the right resources" (*A/59/1, para. 8*).

Pakistan is convinced that sustainable peace can only be assured in the long term by adopting a comprehensive conflict-prevention strategy addressing root causes of conflict, strengthening long-term capacities for the peaceful settlement of disputes and recognizing the inextricable link between peace and development.

Terrorism is the most abhorrent phenomenon of our times. The Secretary-General correctly emphasizes the need for broad-based international cooperation to counter this threat. Pakistan has remained in the vanguard of global efforts to fight this scourge. However, we must underline that, beyond determined action against terrorists, it is essential to have a clear, comprehensive and long-term strategy to strike at the root of the problem to ensure final success. We must work to develop a legal definition of terrorism by consensus. The strategy must also include measures to reduce poverty and address political and economic injustice.

Pakistan believes that it would be a grave historical error to opt for strategies of intervention and pre-emption to counter terrorism, prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD)

or impose order in imploding States. Such strategies can be costly and counter-productive. We should not move away from the restraints in the Charter. External intervention and coercion are more likely to exacerbate, rather than ease, the threat of WMD proliferation. The quest of some States for weapons of mass destruction is often propelled by the fear of external intervention and aggression. Equitable and practical arrangements can, and should be, negotiated in open forums, to strengthen physical and export controls over sensitive materials and technology. The motivations for proliferation can be removed through conflict resolution and security assurances. The States possessing nuclear weapons — now eight, not five — must also work together to develop a realistic programme to achieve nuclear disarmament and prevent nuclear proliferation.

Speaking in the general debate on 22 September, at the 5th meeting, President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan emphasized that the time has come for closing fronts and ending conflicts through reconciliation and reform, harmony and peace. The front that must be closed on a priority basis is the conflict between the Palestinians and Israel, in the Middle East. Winding down the confrontation in Iraq is of equal importance. And we must all support Afghanistan's efforts towards peace, democracy and stability.

In South Asia, the Secretary-General has taken note of important strides by India and Pakistan in efforts to improve their relations and resolve outstanding issues. President Musharraf and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of India met for the first time in New York on 24 September. In a joint statement, both leaders reiterated their commitment to continue the bilateral dialogue to restore normalcy and cooperation between India and Pakistan. On Jammu and Kashmir, they agreed that "possible options for a peaceful and negotiated settlement of the issue should be explored in a sincere spirit and purposeful manner".

The High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change has been given the task to make "bold and practicable recommendations" (*ibid., para. 1*). It is Pakistan's belief that cooperative and democratic multilateralism, based on the principles of the Charter and pursued through the United Nations, offers the best paradigm for a future world order. Cooperative multilateralism should seek just, peaceful and durable solutions to conflicts and disputes. It should address the root causes of conflicts and chaos, rather than only their symptoms and consequences.

The plethora of today's threats to peace and security and the difficulties in addressing them effectively do not arise from institutional weaknesses of the United Nations or the irrelevance of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. They are indeed largely a consequence of the neglect of the principles of the Charter. It would therefore be a tragedy if the United Nations, dedicated to promote peace and conflict resolution, were to itself succumb to the logic of power rather than uphold the power of our Charter's principles.

The Security Council acts on behalf of the general membership of the United Nations. It should be accountable to the General Assembly. Its work should be more transparent and its decision-making more democratic. It should be enlarged to reflect the larger membership of the United Nations, not to accommodate a few ambitious States. The vast majority of Member States agree that adding more permanent members to the Security Council because of their size, power or wealth will not enhance the representativeness or the efficiency of the Council. On the contrary, new permanent members would further complicate the Council's decision-making and provoke new tensions in several regions of the world and, indeed, within the United Nations itself. We are nevertheless prepared to consider new ideas that will build consensus on the addition of elected members to the Security Council — elected and accountable to the general membership of the United Nations.

The General Assembly, the supreme body of the United Nations, must reassert the extensive authority that has been vested in it by the Charter. The Economic and Social Council must play the central policy role that was entrusted to it but which has been progressively ceded to other international organizations. The three principal United Nations bodies also need to work together, especially in addressing the growing number of complex crises with which the international community is confronted. Pakistan has proposed the composition of ad hoc committees, which deserves serious consideration.

Pakistan has consistently supported the efforts of the Secretary-General to streamline the Secretariat, strengthen its human resource base and adopt a results-based approach. In that context, two overarching

considerations are clear. First, the United Nations must be provided adequate financial resources to perform the myriad and growing tasks with which it has now been entrusted. Secondly, the intergovernmentally agreed priorities of the Organization must determine resources, and not the other way around.

There is now an emerging international consensus regarding the inextricable link between peace and development. We share the Secretary-General's assessment that the prospects for meeting the Millennium Development Goals remain uneven. That will threaten both development and peace. We are concerned that, despite an agreement on a broad strategy for global development, poverty levels and the rising disparities in wealth and opportunity within and between nations have been accentuated. There is a real risk of falling well short of realizing the Millennium Development Goals.

Pakistan would like to propose that, in the run-up to the high-level five-year review of the Millennium Declaration in 2005, we work out a concrete plan for a partnership for development based on four pillars: first, good national governance; secondly, adequate financing for development; thirdly, a fair international trading system and; fourthly, open access to technologies required for development. The 2005 event must focus on development. We should initiate preparations for that event at the fifty-ninth session, with a view to achieving a negotiated outcome that enjoys the consensus of the United Nations membership. That consensus must also address the needs of vulnerable groups of countries that continue to remain marginalized in the global economy — such as in sub-Saharan Africa, the least developed countries, the landlocked countries and the small island developing countries.

Mr. Al-Jomae (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I have the pleasure of joining previous speakers in conveying my gratitude to the Secretary-General for his report on the work of the Organization (A/59/1) and to commend him for the huge undertaking involved in drafting the report.

The report is comprehensive in its presentation of the developments experienced by the international community in the past year. The report is also realistic when, in its opening pages, it points out that the United Nations has been through an extraordinarily challenging year. Observers of the international situation believe that the real reason for that is that many Member States have given up their commitment to the purposes and principles of the United Nations and have not respected international legally binding resolutions. Recent events in many parts of the world have illustrated that there is no place for unilateral action outside the framework of international legality in dealing with such current problems as terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Terrorism constitutes a threat to international peace and security. Throughout the world, the sense of security is declining because of that phenomenon. We would like to emphasize that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia condemns terrorism in all its forms. My country has illustrated that by fully cooperating with, and taking part in international efforts to combat terrorism. It has also adhered to the relevant international conventions. In that connection, we would like to emphasize that any international effort to combat terrorism will not be able to fully eradicate this phenomenon if it fails to address the root causes of its emergence and spread.

Because my country, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, believes that terrorism is a very serious international phenomenon that must be confronted in cooperation by all countries and Governments, my country announced from this rostrum that it plans to host an international conference on combating terrorism, to be held in the city of Riyadh on 5 February 2005. The purpose of the conference will be to exchange information and expertise and to make full use of the scientific and practical means available to combat terrorism and its relationship to money-laundering and trafficking in drugs and weapons.

The report of the Secretary-General has referred to the Organization's sincere efforts to achieve disarmament and to put an end to the evils of arms proliferation. It is clear that the international commitment to disarmament conventions has been weak. Everyone knows that we in the Middle East are living in a region of crises and conflicts in which Israel insists upon not adhering to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons or to subject its nuclear facilities to the international safeguards regime. We must therefore seize this opportunity to call upon the international community to underscore the importance of taking the necessary steps to guarantee that the Middle East becomes a zone free from all

weapons of mass destruction. That would lead to security and stability in both the region and the world.

The Millennium Declaration endorsed by heads of State or Government included the Millennium Goals, in the conviction that the United Nations is the best collective mechanism to confront the challenges and pressing issues before the international community. Those include, inter alia, putting an end to poverty and hunger and armed conflict; bringing about disarmament; and combating serious pandemics, including AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, among others. The United Nations has taken it upon itself to organize international conferences to address those issues and to come up with appropriate solutions. However, it is obvious that the efforts of the United Nations in that regard will be inadequate without clear collective international determination to face those challenges. Progress towards the attainment of those goals has thus far been unsatisfactory.

Mr. Musambachime (Zambia): On behalf of my delegation, I wish to extend to you, Sir, our congratulations on your assumption of the high office of President of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. My delegation is privileged to serve as one of the 21 Vice-Presidents of the session. We pledge our full cooperation to you in the discharge of your duties. I also wish to congratulate your predecessor, Mr. Julian Robert Hunte of Saint Lucia, for the able manner in which he presided over the business of the fifty-eighth session. I would also like to take this opportunity to commend Secretary-General Kofi Annan, a distinguished son of Africa, for the able manner in which he steered the work of the United Nations since coming into office. His diplomatic skills have facilitated the effective handling of global threats to international peace and security.

Zambia welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization, which is contained in document A/59/1. Our Organization has undertaken various efforts to promote peace and security in many regions and countries. Conflict prevention, peacemaking, peace-building and peacekeeping are instruments that have been utilized in our quest to achieve disarmament and establish peace and security in Member States.

Through those efforts our Organization has denied terrorists access to weapons of mass destruction and has helped curb the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, which destabilizes States. In that regard, Zambia looks forward to the recommendations of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, which was appointed by the Secretary-General in November 2003. The appointment of the Panel was timely, when threats to international peace and security are on the increase. We reaffirm our readiness to cooperate with other Member States of the United Nations to enhance efforts in combating international terrorism.

As stated by the Secretary-General in his report, the plight of the peoples of Africa, where there are still many conflicts, is a top priority concern of our Organization.

Zambia looks forward to the high-level plenary meeting that will be convened at Headquarters in 2005 to review the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. We also firmly believe that all Member States have a collective responsibility to implement the commitments set forth in the Millennium Declaration. Similarly, Zambia hopes that the New Partnership for Africa's Development, which Africa is implementing, will complement and enhance the efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Zambia supports the ongoing reform of the United Nations. It shares the concerns of other countries that that important process has not yet been completed. Zambia strongly believes that the reform should address the concerns of developing countries. In that regard, we look forward to progress reports on the reform.

Zambia appreciates the recent initiatives by the President of the fifty-eighth session on the revitalization, reform and enhancement of the working methods of the General Assembly, as the highest, deliberative and decision-making body of the United Nations. My delegation stands ready to continue actively participating in the reform process during this session.

Regarding the reform of the Security Council, Zambia remains concerned about the lack of progress. President Mwanawasa addressed that issue in his address to the General Assembly a few weeks ago. It is our hope that progress can be made on that issue.

Zambia believes in multilateralism, which continues to be an indispensable instrument to achieve

global consensus on important, life-saving issues. As a global community, we face challenges that are both transnational and interconnected in nature. It is essential that we take advantage of the immense problem-solving potential that multilateralism offers. As President Mwanawasa stated a few weeks ago, unilateralism should have no place in this global era.

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons is a major concern in most of our countries. Zambia has been implementing the Southern African Development Community's Operational Programme on Prevention, Combating and Control of Illicit Trafficking in Small Arms and Light Weapons. The Southern African Regional Police Chiefs Cooperation Organization, which was established in 1995, has been the major instrument in our region in the fight against the scourge of small arms and light weapons. However, my Government is particularly concerned about the continuing illicit trade associated with such arms, which often end up in the hands of non-State actors.

In conclusion, my Government reaffirms its commitment to multilateralism as a solution to the challenges that confront the world. It is in that regard that my delegation reiterates its commitment to working with the Secretary-General to implement the recommendations contained in his report.

Ms. Ramiro-Lopez (Philippines): My delegation welcomes the report of the Secretary-General (A/59/1), with its overarching message that the United Nations has done its best during the period under review to live by the mandate entrusted to it by the Charter, despite resource constraints and emerging challenges heretofore unforeseen.

My delegation concurs with the Secretary-General's conclusion that Member States, which make up the United Nations, should not relent in their continuous struggle for a world of greater justice. Indeed, peace is the centrepiece of the vision of a just world — inexorably made up of interdependent nations contributing their shared responsibilities in the pursuit of that vision. However, peace becomes durable only if the rule of law and the principle of multilateralism are universally observed.

The year under review witnessed an unprecedented upsurge in the demand for United Nations peacekeeping forces worldwide, which now include 16 missions involving 56,000 military personnel and 11,000 police personnel, not to mention the civilian components. Compounding the challenge to the United Nations is the huge cost involved in peacekeeping operations, which is slowly approaching the total budget of the Organization itself. That serious development is an indicator of the mounting challenges ahead of us.

The establishment of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, which the Secretary-General set up last year, represents a timely and positive step in objectively examining the threats and challenges confronting the international community and in identifying the options to be taken to effectively address challenges.

However, many delegations look upon the report of the Panel, to be submitted to the Secretary-General on 1 December 2004, as a major input in the efforts to reform the Security Council. My delegation believes that there should be a holistic approach to examine ways to effectively address the worsening international security environment. Although the Charter of the United Nations gives the Security Council the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, the emergence of new forms of threats to international security — such as poverty, disease and international terrorism, to name a few — allows for a comprehensive approach involving other main bodies of the United Nations, namely the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. Moreover, other affiliated United Nations agencies, with their own governing boards, should be brought to the fore in this collective effort to address security challenges. My delegation hopes that the Panel adopts a comprehensive approach in that regard.

Chapter VIII of the Charter allows regional organizations to initiate activities, with the prior authority of the Security Council, on the pacific settlement of disputes, peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace-building. Regional organizations should therefore be tapped, not only because of the geographical stake they hold but also to help alleviate the resource constraints faced by the United Nations, to which regional organizations could contribute.

In September 2000, during the Millennium Summit, the leaders of 189 countries adopted the Millennium Declaration, which generated the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Millennium Declaration raised our hopes that the lives of 1 billion poor people around the world could be

alleviated from the dehumanizing conditions of abject poverty. Thus far, achieving the MDGs remains the biggest challenge that the international community has to face. If we are to achieve the MDGs, a number of implementation issues will have to be addressed at the national, regional and international levels.

There is a need to generate MDG-related data to improve the targeting of clientele and the identification of appropriate policy measures and interventions to address socio-economic and gender disparities. Accurate and comparable information is needed to enhance the monitoring of the MDGs across countries. Communication and advocacy campaigns have to be sustained to generate more interest, commitment and resources to achieve the MDGs. In popularizing the MDGs, we must seek the support of local Government units, parliamentary bodies, indigenous, private and civil society groups and the mass media.

It is our core belief that each country has the primary responsibility for its own development. Every country must come up with its own poverty-reduction strategy in the context of the MDGs. But a conducive, nurturing international environment must complement national efforts. That can only happen if developing countries enjoy an adequate space to apply appropriate policy instruments in such areas as trade, investment, technology and other specific economic activities.

The importance of official development assistance to assist developing countries to achieve the MDGs cannot be overemphasized. Developed countries must fulfil their commitments to allocate 0.7 per cent of their gross national product to official development assistance. The international community should likewise ensure a fair, rules-based and equitable multilateral trading system, to provide developing countries opportunities for income-generation, employment, trade and improved livelihoods. Economic security is ensured when the playing field is level for both developed and developing countries.

The international community should take a closer look at innovative ways to address the chronic debt problem in the developing world.

Developing countries must pursue much-needed reform to ensure the efficient use of resources and improve governance.

On the issue of governance, national policy measures must be geared towards addressing chronic graft and corruption and towards promoting transparency to improve investor confidence.

Priority should also be given to increasing food security, universal education, employment generation, health care and gender equality.

We must work simultaneously on several fronts in the war against HIV/AIDS. First, we must commit the required financial resources to address the problem of the millions around the world who suffer from HIV/AIDS, 90 per cent of whom are reported to be living below the poverty threshold. We commend the establishment of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria to provide important financial resources, both at the country and community levels.

Secondly, Governments and civil society should reaffirm their political resolve to work together against HIV/AIDS. While there seems to be positive political momentum in that regard, we must continue to strengthen our Governments' cooperative links with civil society, international organizations and the private sector.

Lastly, we have to strengthen and improve the capacity of the countries concerned that need more training and skills-building. Capacity-building will be critical at all stages, particularly in the planning, implementation and evaluation stages.

We bear witness daily to atrocities perpetrated in the name of war: men and women, both young and old, are massacred or driven from their homes; public places are blasted; prisoners are tortured; women are raped; young boys and girls are forced to take up arms, and other barbaric acts take place. There are those who argue that those are just some of war's necessary evils. We believe, however, that they are not. We insist that they are outright violations of a universally recognized body of law known as international humanitarian law, the principles of which are embodied in the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their amending protocols, as well as in the 1954 Hague Convention.

International humanitarian law has afforded protection to innumerable victims of violations of law. There is a general consensus, however, that the continued violation of humanitarian rules is a result of ignorance of humanitarian laws, or utter contempt for them. We therefore have a duty to ensure that treaties on international humanitarian law are known and

respected by our peoples. Merely acceding to them is not enough to guarantee their observance.

In that connection, the Philippines strongly supports efforts to strengthen and enhance the policy framework for the protection of civilians in armed conflict. As stated in the report of the Secretary-General, there has been notable progress in the area of humanitarian law since the agenda on the protection of civilians trapped in war was launched five years ago. That should inspire us all the more to rededicate ourselves to the task of promoting greater consciousness in the ideals of humanitarian law.

Mr. Haraguchi (Japan): The report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/59/1) has been presented in order to remind us once again of the enormous and wide-ranging challenges that the United Nations is facing today. In view of the nature of those challenges, as well due to progressive globalization and the increasing level of interdependency in today's international community, we strongly feel the need to keep our multilateral framework as credible as possible, so that we will be able to work out collective solutions to those challenges effectively.

I would today like to touch upon some of the issues we consider critical in reviewing the work of the United Nations over the past year.

Let me begin with Iraq. Stability in Iraq has a lot to do with peace and stability in the Middle East as a whole. I am convinced that the international community must make a united effort to support the transition process in Iraq, so that the country can return to the international community as early as possible as a stable and democratic nation that is friendly to its neighbouring countries. We believe that the United Nations has a leading role to play in that endeavour.

It is of vital importance that the political process be promoted by the Iraqi people themselves according to the timetable provided for in Security Council resolution 1546 (2004). The most urgent task in that regard is to carry out the elections to the Transitional National Assembly as scheduled, in January of next year. We strongly hope that the utmost effort will be made to hold inclusive elections with the participation of all major political factions. The support of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq for the Independent Electoral Commission will be critical in ensuring fair and credible elections. It is our sincere hope that the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, Mr. Qazi, will continue to provide leadership in that regard.

Japan has been actively participating in the international effort to assist the Iraqi people in rebuilding their country. It has pledged financial assistance amounting to $5 billion, and is steadily implementing it. Japan has also deployed its Self-Defence Forces in Iraq to provide humanitarian and reconstruction assistance. We will host the third donors' meeting of the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq on 13 and 14 October in Tokyo. We are confident that the meeting will add further momentum to the concerted efforts of the international community to support Iraq. We expect that the meeting will also address the issues of support for the political process, including election support, and will provide us with a good opportunity to reconfirm our unified commitment.

In Afghanistan, the Bonn Process is reaching its final stage with the approach of the presidential election on 9 October, and parliamentary elections next year. The rebirth of Afghanistan as a democratic State is at stake in those elections. It is our sincere hope that the elections be conducted in a peaceful and fair manner, and that they will result in a successful outcome.

Japan, as the sponsor of the International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan held in Tokyo in January 2002, has been playing a major role in assisting that country. Japan's regional comprehensive development assistance programme, known as the Ogata Initiative, aims at facilitating a seamless transition from humanitarian assistance to reconstruction and development assistance. We have been promoting the programme as a model for peace and human security in post-conflict situations.

Japan is also the lead country in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process, together with the United Nations. We will continue our efforts to support direct negotiations between the leaders of the transitional Government and regional commanders, implementation of the commander incentive programmes and promotion of reintegration programmes, so that the momentum for DDR can be maintained even after the presidential election. The reconstruction of Afghanistan is a touchstone in our

fight against terrorism. For that reason, it is essential that the international community continue its support for the efforts of the Afghan people.

Prime Minister Koizumi clearly stated in his address to the General Assembly during the general debate that there will be no stability and prosperity in the world until Africa's issues are resolved. In fact, Africa's issues pose serious challenges to the United Nations, both in achieving peace and security and in promoting development, including meeting the Millennium Development Goals.

In the Sudan, it is crucial that the Government and the rebels make every effort to reach a political settlement on Darfur, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 1556 (2004) and 1564 (2004). All possible measures to improve the security conditions in the region must be taken, beginning with the disarming of the militias in order to halt attacks against civilians. To ensure an end to the current climate of impunity, all those responsible for the massive human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law must urgently be brought to justice. In this regard, we highly appreciate the steps taken by the African Union (AU) for the resolution of the Darfur issue. The international community must continue to assist the efforts of the AU.

In addressing the issue of peace and security in Africa, we are of the view that it is important for African countries to exercise ownership to a greater extent. International support to enhance Africa's capacity for managing conflicts is certainly necessary, but Africa's ownership efforts are the most important element. Japan is strengthening its partnership with the AU through dialogue, so as to enable the AU to play an even more constructive role in peace-building activities.

Japan hosted the Third Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD III), last year. Since the beginning of the TICAD process in 1993, Japan has been steadily providing wide-ranging assistance to Africa. The consolidation of peace, poverty reduction through economic growth and human-centred development are the three main pillars of our undertaking there.

The consolidation of peace and realization of human security are urgent and essential tasks for Africa. A society impoverished by armed conflict remains in a precarious state. Africa stands at the crossroads between peace and national rebirth, on the one hand, and a return to armed conflict, on the other. Under such circumstances, promoting human security enables such a society to move towards peace and robust national reconstruction. Japan advocates the importance of promoting human security and is firmly committed to providing assistance through such channels as the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, in order to promote the protection and empowerment of individuals.

An effective strategy for disaster reduction is one of the key elements in attaining sustainable development. A natural disaster can wipe out the fruits of years of development efforts in an instant. Japan is to host in Kobe next January the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, and it is committed to the success of that Conference.

In another critical sector, that of water and sanitation, Japan is also taking a leading role. In fact, Japan is now the largest contributor in this sector, having provided approximately one third of the worldwide development assistance for drinking water and sanitation in the last three years. Japan's former Prime Minister, Mr. Ryutaro Hashimoto, currently chairs the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation. My country intends to continue its active engagement in this field.

Terrorist activities show no sign of ceasing. Acts of terror continue to claim innocent lives, including those of children. Japan strongly condemns those atrocious acts and acutely feels the necessity of further strengthening international cooperation aimed at deterring such violence. We continue to support the activities of the Counter-Terrorism Committee and the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999) concerning Al Qaeda and the Taliban and Associated Individuals and Entities, and offer them our full cooperation.

The realization of justice and the rule of law is a fundamental element of a stable society. It is also a necessary means to deterring the recurrence of violent conflict. The importance of ownership should be emphasized in this area as well. Each country has the primary responsibility of establishing justice and the rule of law within its own borders. The United Nations, when it extends assistance in this field, should honour the ownership of the recipient countries and give due

consideration to the support and participation of the people.

Japan welcomes the fact that Cambodia's national assembly has approved the agreement with the United Nations with regard to the Khmer Rouge trials. We expect that the further necessary steps will be taken for its prompt ratification. We also sincerely hope that the United Nations will make the necessary preparations with all due haste. Japan, having played a central role in supporting Cambodia's efforts to carry out the trials, urges Member States to make an active contribution to the process with a view to an early realization of the trials.

Through our experience in ad hoc tribunals, such as the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), we have learned that the administrative organizations of such tribunals that are financed through assessed contributions can grow far larger than necessary. That being the case, we need to identify the most efficient and effective form of organization for international tribunals.

My country is increasingly concerned about the rapid expansion of the United Nations regular budget as well as the peacekeeping budget. In order to earn the support of our taxpayers, the United Nations must always be mindful of the need to demonstrate that it is committed to utilizing limited resources properly and with the utmost efficiency.

I would also like to touch upon some aspects of the management of our Organization. Japan considers that the scale of assessments for Member States needs to be more balanced. Another point I would like to emphasize is that we are still a long way from realizing equitable geographical representation with regard to the nationalities of the staff in the United Nations Secretariat. The current condition of severe underrepresentation must be redressed as a matter of priority.

As the Secretary-General's report suggests, the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations will provide us with a good opportunity for fresh thinking about the problems of our world and how the United Nations can address them. In this context, I am pleased to note that the work of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change seems to be progressing as scheduled. It is our strong hope that their report will present a number of inspiring ideas on which to reflect. In our view, one of our vital tasks in this session is to duly follow up the report of the Panel. We need to create a new United Nations for the new era and a multilateral framework that will enable us to cope with new threats and challenges more effectively.

Mr. Hannesson (Iceland): We congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election and wish you well in the important work ahead.

We thank the Secretary-General for presenting his comprehensive report on the work of the Organization (A/59/1), which maps out the daunting tasks before the United Nations. Rather than addressing any of the specific issues, I will concentrate on a prerequisite for success in general: the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly and the strengthening of the United Nations system.

Iceland welcomes the successful implementation of resolutions 58/126 and 58/316 on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, adopted at the fifty-eighth session of the Assembly, and looks forward to further improvements of our work. Iceland appreciates the memorandum by the Secretary-General on the organization of the current session of the General Assembly, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items (A/BUR/59/1), in which agenda items are organized under headings corresponding to the priorities of the Organization as contained in the medium-term plan.

It is in the spirit of efficiency that Iceland has decided to address in its statement today, under the heading "Organizational, administrative and other matters", items that were also covered during last Monday's debate on revitalization and that will be dealt with at next Monday's debate on Security Council reform.

Enhancing the authority and the role of the General Assembly and improving the Assembly's working methods should continue to be based on the good work already carried out. New rules for the exchange of information between the two bodies — the General Assembly and the Security Council — through periodic reports from the Council to the Assembly and through formal consultations — as decided in resolution 58/126 — should increase the transparency and thereby the efficiency of the Organization.

Streamlining the work of the General Assembly is, however, part of a much greater challenge to adjust

our multilateral structures to deal with threats to global security. The recommendations of the Secretary-General in the light of the work of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change will serve as a valuable step towards the reform we have long called for.

The delicate question of reform of the Security Council has long occupied our work. Although reform of the Council will not solve all our problems, failure to address that issue will act as a brake on effective revitalization in other areas. Iceland has persistently called for reform of the Security Council in order to make it more representative. The current composition of the Council mirrors neither today's geopolitical realities nor the increased membership of the United Nations. At the same time, the Council's efficiency in coping with the serious issues on its agenda must be ensured. The Icelandic Government supports an increase in the non-permanent category, as well as the allocation of permanent seats to Japan, India, Germany and Brazil. Africa must also be ensured a permanent seat on the Council.

Iceland strongly believes that changes are long overdue. If we grasp this chance for reform, 60 years after the founding of the United Nations, the Organization will strengthen its role as the forum for addressing major threats to the world's security in the future. We are prepared to work together with other delegations to ensure a good reception of the results of the Panel's work. Iceland looks forward to what the Secretary-General characterized as bold and practicable recommendations of the High-level Panel and to his recommendations based on the Panel's report.

Mr. Mubarez (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): The report of the Secretary-General (A/59/1) now before us for consideration covers a number of facts with regard to what the Organization has been doing in several areas over the past year — facts that we encounter in our collective activities and that encourage us to share many of the conclusions drawn by the Secretary-General. Before I make detailed comments on the report, I should commend the Secretary-General for its comprehensiveness, and its presentation of facts and visions.

We agree with the Secretary-General that last year was filled with challenges for the United Nations — multiple challenges that added to the burden of the Organization and in many cases exceeded the scope of its resources. Unfortunately, that was accompanied by a split in multilateral action and the continued use of unilateralism, which runs counter to the requirements for mutual trust and collective security.

Statements made at this session reflect the views and the determination of the entire international community with regard to the adoption of structural reforms whose institutional concepts are needed for the strengthening of international multilateral action. Our country has always supported that approach because we are firmly convinced that only through international multilateral action can we effectively address collective security challenges and the requirements of globalization. This can be achieved through regional and international institutions, especially this Organization.

We are pleased to note in the report of the Secretary-General that the Organization has undertaken efforts in several areas to meet the increasing demands of those challenges and that we need to adapt to changes in the international sphere. While we agree with the anticipated recommendations of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, we strongly believe that the best way to attain our objectives remains participation, whether it is a question of taking decisions at the international level or implementing chapter II of the report, on achieving peace and security. That chapter gives us a true picture of innovative methods as well as of United Nations work that moves beyond the maintenance of peace and security to peace-building and the building of international institutions.

The Organization's achievements in meeting its humanitarian responsibilities are satisfactory. Paragraph 84 of the report states that the number of refugees has decreased by nearly 1 million persons for two consecutive years. We are pleased to note the initiative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees aimed at repatriating refugees both to relieve their sufferings and to assist countries that host them. We also appreciate the efforts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to provide basic assistance to Palestinian refugees, despite the constant shortfall in its budget, which makes it impossible for it to fully meet their needs, as noted in paragraph 106. It

can provide only limited services to some of those refugees.

Paragraph 100 also states clearly that the continuing Israeli aggression against the population of the occupied Palestinian territories is exacerbating the sufferings of the Palestinian refugees and that the situation there remains tragic. Joint action is a necessity, not an option, to meet these challenges and changes and to address the varied interests of the parties involved. We must adapt our working methods to new realities, and we therefore eagerly await the report to be submitted by the High-level Panel as well as preparations for the Millennium Summit+5 conference focusing on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. We unreservedly support the views and ideas put forward at the Millennium Summit regarding reform of the United Nations, as it is the main institution for international collective action.

We note with interest greater participation by non-governmental organizations. The partnership that has been proposed will enhance and strengthen democratization in the work of the Organization. However, we must be cautious here. We must give greater consideration to this issue so as to ensure the best possible partnerships among the United Nations and civil society organizations.

We believe that priority should be accorded to the strengthening of civil society institutions in developing countries. We must promote participation at the local level before moving to the international one.

Finally, allow me to express our appreciation for the report submitted to us by the Secretary-General. My delegation is prepared to cooperate with you, Mr. President, to help make this session a success, so that we can move forward in our common work.

Mr. Ngo Duc Thang (Viet Nam): Let me begin by joining previous speakers in reiterating my delegation's appreciation of the Secretary-General's annual report on the work of the Organization. We note with satisfaction that the issues of international peace and security and sustainable development have been highlighted in the report as primary tasks on the agenda of the Organization.

As mentioned by the Secretary-General in the introduction to his report, the past year has been a very challenging year for the United Nations — from the controversies surrounding the Iraq crisis to continuing violent conflicts, international terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, the spread of infectious diseases, extreme poverty and hunger, environmental degradation and human rights violations.

In the mix of those many challenges, for many of the world's peoples the threats posed by extreme poverty and hunger as well as by deadly diseases such as HIV/AIDS are no less serious and are more immediate than those posed by weapons of any kind. It is urgent that, while continuing to cope with traditional threats, we try to find solutions to emerging new ones. We wish to express our deep appreciation of the Secretary-General's decision to appoint a High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. We look forward to receiving the Panel's report and hope that the recommendations contained therein will form a good basis for careful consideration by Member States of timely actions for change.

From Iraq to the Middle East and Africa, violent conflicts and hostilities continue to threaten the lives of millions of civilians. In many other parts of the world, tension remains or keeps escalating, threatening international peace and security. The report provides an in-depth analysis of the performance, progress and shortcomings of the Organization in bringing peace, independence and reconciliation to the countries concerned. The Vietnamese delegation shares the unanimous view that the crucial role of the United Nations needs to be further enhanced to tackle the challenges facing us.

In that connection, we welcome resolution 58/269, which was recently adopted and reaffirms the vital role of the United Nations in the field of the maintenance of global peace and security as well as the promotion of international cooperation. We deeply appreciate the Secretary-General's tireless efforts aimed at strengthening the Organization's capacity in the area of the prevention and resolution of armed conflicts, including peacekeeping and peace-building activities. We encourage the speedier development of a comprehensive and coherent conflict-prevention strategy to respond effectively to the challenges posed by the peacekeeping and peace-building processes.

Terrorism has become the most pressing danger and challenge. Viet Nam condemns all acts of terrorism, in all its forms and manifestations. We support the Secretary-General's view on the need for

broad international cooperation to fight this scourge. We are pleased to note from the report that there is close cooperation among relevant agencies such as the Counter-Terrorism Committee, the Terrorism Prevention Branch of the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, and the Department of Public Information to coordinate and reinvigorate the global response to terrorism. We wish to reaffirm here the position of the Vietnamese Government that, in order to mobilize broad participation and maintain its own legitimacy, the fight against terrorism must be free from any selectivity or double standard.

Even as many developing countries face major difficulties resulting from a lack of financial resources for activities aimed at eradicating poverty and hunger, not to mention development projects, hundreds of billions of dollars continue to be wasted in an ongoing arms race. The report mentioned the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction as a cause of continued great concern and noted several positive signs relating to disarmament. We think, however, that the report would have been more comprehensive if the lack of progress in the proceedings of major United Nations disarmament bodies such as the Disarmament Commission — especially in the area of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction — had been reflected and recommendations made to overcome the problem.

We commend the efforts of the Organization to meet its humanitarian commitments. We share the Secretary-General's concern over the persistent underfunding of humanitarian action.

My delegation commends the Secretary-General and supports the good work he has been doing and the leadership he has been providing in the area of cooperation for development. We are pleased that the report has placed at the centre of the work of the Organization the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), such as tackling poverty to narrow the gap between the rich and the poor; fighting diseases such as HIV/AIDS; preventing drug trafficking; and protecting the environment.

We share the concern about the lack of financial resources to implement the MDGs, and we fully support the Secretary-General's call on donor nations to meet the target of devoting 0.7 per cent of gross national product to official development assistance and to expand available funds to reinforce financing for development and the promotion of sustainable development. We concur with the Secretary-General in emphasizing that balanced and equitable international trade is one of the important ways to assist developing and least developed countries in achieving the MDGs. We also fully support the Secretary-General's call for international commitments on the part of other stakeholders — including the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization, the private sector and civil society — in order to create more democratic and open world trade and financial systems.

My last comment is related to the work of the Organization in the area of management. My delegation wishes to commend the initiatives and proposals put forward by the Secretary-General in his report to improve the capacity and efficiency of the United Nations. We have taken note with great interest of the Secretary-General's new proposals to replace the current four-year medium-term plan with a new biennial strategic framework and a redesigned programme performance report. We fully support that strategic framework, which improves managerial accountability. With regard to human resources management, my delegation would again like to underscore the need to further enhance the transparency, efficiency and effectiveness of the United Nations recruitment process. We wish to stress that any system of recruitment should take into consideration the need to ensure equitable representation at the United Nations.

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): The report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization before us (A/59/1) makes it clear both how impressive the activities and achievements of the United Nations are and how complex and challenging are the tasks it faces. It offers a rare glimpse into the range of undertakings of the Organization and can serve as a useful tool in defending the Organization against its numerous detractors, whose arguments are as often based on ignorance as they are on malevolence. The report can even be used as a reference book, since it offers a concise account of the history and state of play in the areas where the Organization is actively involved. A more analytical reading, however, leads to the significant question of whether the Organization is truly equipped to successfully tackle all the issues before it.

All its mandates, of course, are given to the United Nations by us, the Member States; and one must wonder whether we are fully living up to our responsibilities in that respect. The most complex problems of a globalized world — such as, for example, combating terrorism, HIV/AIDS and the eradication of poverty — are handed over to the United Nations to deal with them. While we almost automatically do this, we have been negligent in supplying the Organization with the tools to do the job. At the core of a successful United Nations is the unequivocal commitment from its Member States to multilateralism. The most credible and effective expression of that commitment is unwavering political and financial support, as well as ongoing work to adjust the United Nations to the changed, and changing, circumstances in which it works.

The expectations concerning the outcome of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change are high, and we share them. Nevertheless, the decisions that need to be made cannot be outsourced; we have to make them ourselves. Changes in the institutional architecture are necessary and inevitable. The United Nations cannot remain a reflection of its history, but must be designed in a manner that reflects the current challenges.

The year 2005 will be a decisive one. We must think early about how to make the next year a successful one from the intergovernmental side. It seems crucial to us that we agree at an early stage on a comprehensive and interconnected agenda. It must be clear, in particular, that development and security are mutually reinforcing and inseparable, which means that one cannot be dealt with successfully if the other is neglected. In that connection, the Millennium Development Goals must be at the core of our deliberations, as they constitute the biggest promise we have made collectively and the most ambitious goal we have set for ourselves.

We believe that institutional changes are needed, and we also believe that they must be carried out in a manner that preserves, and indeed improves, the institutional balance of the Organization. A more modern and more representative Security Council must be complemented by a leaner, more flexible and more relevant General Assembly that truly fulfils the tasks assigned to it under the Charter. The enlargement of the Security Council is a necessity. If we were to fail to seize the growing momentum in that respect, we would probably squander the opportunity to do so for a long time to come. However, the highly political question of enlargement must not distract us from effectively dealing with the other elements of Security Council reform that must be addressed simultaneously. We believe that only a more representative and more accountable Security Council will be able to effectively tackle threats to international peace and security on behalf of the international community as a whole.

The report pays tribute to the victims of the attack on United Nations headquarters in Baghdad on 19 August 2003, and rightly so. We must remember that most painful event and be determined to take the action that is our responsibility. The security conditions under which United Nations staff operate throughout the world must be improved and the relevant mechanism, at Headquarters but especially in the field, must be enhanced. We look forward to the relevant suggestions of the Secretary-General in that respect, and will continue working on the important aspect of legal protection in particular. At the same time, we must ensure that the United Nations remains committed to its most important function, which is to bestow legitimacy upon international and collective action. We therefore very much welcome the vision of the Secretary-General in placing the respect for the rule of law at the top of his agenda for the coming months and years.

Mr. Wali (Nigeria): I would like to express the appreciation of the delegation of Nigeria to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his report on the work of the Organization, contained in document A/59/1. The report has highlighted some of the most challenging issues confronting the international community. These include conflict prevention and resolution, terrorism, natural disasters, disease control, disarmament and arms control, poverty and sustainable development. The report, which has ably reviewed the efforts of our Organization to secure a constructive and enduring solution to fundamental global problems, has also drawn attention to the complexities of the tasks confronting humanity.

It is in this context that Nigeria views with concern the persistence of conflicts in many regions of the world. We therefore commend the efforts of the United Nations, through the Security Council, to maintain international peace and security. While the United Nations has achieved some measure of success,

we still need to do more to usher in durable peace and stability in conflict-ravaged areas.

Nigeria also commends the efforts of the Secretary-General in his continued use of preventive diplomacy and of special envoys for peacemaking and peace-building in the maintenance of international peace and security. To some extent, we have achieved the targets set in the Millennium Declaration, despite the rather discouraging surge in the global demand for peacekeeping operations.

We note with satisfaction that, with the assistance of the United Nations, regional organizations are becoming more focused and proactive in the maintenance of international peace and security, through the establishment of institutional cooperation for conflict prevention, management and resolution. In this regard, we commend the assistance extended to the African Union for the establishment of its Peace and Security Council, the African Standby Force and the Military Staff Committee. We note with satisfaction the assistance and cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), particularly in the areas of peacekeeping and peace-building in Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone.

ECOWAS has been able to address complex humanitarian issues in the subregion, thanks to the cooperative efforts of the United Nations. We urge the international community to extend financial and logistical support to ECOWAS and the African Union in order to enhance their capacity for the maintenance of peace and security in the subregion.

We endorse the memorandum of understanding and the programme of work between ECOWAS and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa. We appreciate that that involves joint activities in the areas of governance, security sector reform, electoral assistance, youth unemployment and the control and circulation of small arms and light weapons.

As the world continues to suffer the devastating consequences of terrorist acts, Nigeria reaffirms its condemnation of international terrorism. We pledge our cooperation with other members of the international community, through bilateral and multilateral efforts, to combat this menace in all its forms. Accordingly, we condemn the recent terrorist attack on a school in Beslan, Russia, and reaffirm our support for Security Council resolution 1502 (2003) on the protection of civilians and humanitarian and United Nations personnel in conflict areas. We condemn in the strongest terms all acts of terrorism, and urge firm action by all members of the international community to deny support of any kind to terrorists and their cohorts.

The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons continues to pose serious concern to the international community, in particular developing countries, since it contributes to conflicts and political instability. The excessive accumulation and easy availability of small arms and light weapons hinders peace-building and development efforts and threatens human security. In this regard, the ECOWAS moratorium on the importation, exportation and manufacture of small arms and light weapons in West Africa has been a useful mechanism for a coordinated and sustainable regional approach to controlling this menace.

We reiterate our commitment to the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, adopted in July 2001. We urge the international community to control the movement of such weapons, especially to non-State actors. While we note the progressive decrease in the production and transfer of landmines, it is regrettable that they continue to impede the development and security of populations, especially in African States that are emerging from conflict. In this regard, we urge the international community to strengthen its support for the United Nations Mine Action Service, as that is the principal coordinating body of the United Nations for curbing the menace of landmines.

Another major threat facing the United Nations and the international community is the proliferation of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, especially the dangerous possibility of their acquisition by individuals and terrorist groups. Although there are agreements and conventions governing the production, use, stockpiling and transfer of such weapons, the lack of transparency and commitment in the implementation of their provisions have regrettably eroded respect for compliance. In particular, lack of progress on broad disarmament measures regarding nuclear weapons is not in the best interests of the international community. We therefore call on the parties to those conventions to honour their obligations in the interests of international peace and security.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic continues to pose grave challenges to our developmental efforts. We appreciate the efforts of the United Nations and the contribution of the international community to combating this scourge, particularly in Africa. We reiterate our commitment to the framework for action adopted at the African Union's special summit of African leaders in Abuja, and the African Union Summit held this year in Addis Ababa, to intensify their efforts and mobilize resources for the prevention, care and treatment of people infected by the disease.

In the Millennium Declaration, world leaders resolved, among other things, to eliminate poverty by launching a sustained campaign to make the right to development a reality for all nations. In this regard, African Governments are giving prominence to the Millennium Development Goals in their strategic development planning and budgetary allocations. They have also agreed to encourage public-private partnership and broad-based participation in the planning and implementation of development programmes. The strategy is for Governments to create an enabling environment, while the private sector assumes a leadership role in economic development and the provision of services.

While these are imperative measures for Africa to undertake, the international community has an obligation to fulfil the commitments and promises that it made decades ago on economic development assistance. We therefore call on our development partners to deliver on their official development assistance commitments, which they reaffirmed in Monterrey and Johannesburg.

Nigeria reaffirms its support for the priority accorded by the United Nations to the special needs of Africa, with the establishment of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa. We note with satisfaction the continued efforts of the Office to facilitate the implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). In this regard, we commend the Office of the Special Adviser for the publication of *South-South Cooperation in Support of the New Partnership for Africa's Development: Experiences of Africa-Latin America and the Caribbean*.

Nigeria endorses the appointment of the independent panel of eminent persons to review and assess the scope and adequacy of international support for NEPAD and to conduct dialogue with Africa's development partners, with a view to promoting support for NEPAD. We look forward to the recommendations of the panel.

The Charter of the United Nations and other sources of international law have established conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties can be maintained. The rule of law is becoming more widely accepted, and States are increasingly employing treaties to regulate their relations. We commend the support and assistance provided by the United Nations to the International Criminal Tribunals for Rwanda and for the former Yugoslavia, as well as to the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

In conclusion, Nigeria is pleased to note that the Secretary-General has made commendable efforts towards strengthening the effectiveness of our Organization. We are satisfied with the various initiatives that have been put in place, and we pledge our continued cooperation with all efforts to strengthen our Organization.

Mr. Balestra (San Marino): On this occasion, I wish to thank the Secretary-General for the report contained in document A/59/1. It lists all the work accomplished, all the work not accomplished, all our frustrations and all our hopes and contains a call to fulfil all our commitments and obligations. Following the invitation to be brief, I will touch on only a few points of the report.

Sadly, the general sense prevailing among us is that the international community will not succeed in reaching the objectives of the United Nations Millennium Declaration by 2015. It is encouraging, however, to acknowledge that the Secretary-General believes that it will still be possible to achieve some of the time-bound and measurable goals set in the Declaration, if developed and developing countries institute the right combination of national and international policies and implement their shared commitments, as set forth in the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the Monterrey Consensus. San Marino thinks that this is the main conclusion we should draw from the Secretary-General's report. If we want to achieve our common objectives, we must honour the accepted commitments and apply the agreed policies. The time for action has arrived.

In the context of macroeconomic policies, one element in the Secretary-General's report caught my

attention: the range of actions that Governments, public development institutions, the private sector and civil society organizations can undertake to spur the growth of small and medium-size businesses. This is an area that should be enhanced, in particular for some developing countries, since, linked with a policy of microcredits, it would favour the development of small businesses and facilitate the participation of women and young people in the economic life of their country. We believe we have some authority to recommend this process, since it has been implemented in San Marino, although in a different context, and has been a winning policy for our economy for many years.

The insufficiency of financial assistance and the inadequacy of the tools in our hands are apparent in all areas of international cooperation, but are particularly evident in the fight against natural disasters. Environmental degradation and climate changes are — and will be — provoking natural disasters of increasing intensity. It is therefore necessary to strengthen the United Nations institutions in this field, in both the prevention of natural disasters and the provision of humanitarian assistance to the victims.

San Marino welcomes the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report entitled "Reducing disaster risk: a challenge for development", identifying the vulnerability of countries to three key natural hazards: earthquakes, tropical cyclones and floods. San Marino also welcomes the United Nations University's launching of a programme to reduce the risk of catastrophic floods in Asia and the Pacific. Similar programmes could also be implemented to address disasters of a different nature and in other regions of the globe.

San Marino agrees with the Secretary-General when he states that the fight against terrorism must be firmly advanced with determination and with full respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law. Since the tragic 11 September attack on the United States, the international community has become aware of the seriousness of terrorism. Recurrent dramatic events worldwide, such as the violent attacks perpetrated in Iraq and in other parts of the world against not only soldiers but also civilians, the media and even non-governmental organization humanitarian mission staff, make imperative a search for a common and effective response based on stronger joint commitments.

We cannot deny that an effective strategy against terrorism still remains to be found. The activity of the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) seems to have stalled, after an initial élan. The proposal by Costa Rica to create a high commissioner for terrorism should be explored further, as it would involve the Security Council as well as the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly in the fight against terrorism, allowing us to fight not only the results, but also the deep causes of terrorism.

Mr. Sardenberg (Brazil): I would like to start by thanking the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the work of the Organization.

As the scope of action of the United Nations is too broad to be adequately dealt with in its entirety at this juncture, I shall focus on the following two aspects, which in our view are inextricably linked: achieving peace and security and cooperating for development. I shall also refer to the question of the reform of the Organization, an issue that will permeate the work of the Organization throughout the coming 12 months.

As the report rightly states, the United Nations has been through an extraordinarily challenging year. In terms of the maintenance of international peace and security, the situation in Iraq alone would, in our view, be sufficient to demonstrate the magnitude of the challenges facing the Organization. Barely one year ago, the tragic attack against the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad took the lives of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to Iraq and United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Sergio Vieira de Mello, and of other dedicated members of the United Nations staff in that country.

As a member of the Security Council for the period of 2004 to 2005, Brazil has been involved in the discussions regarding the situation in Iraq in a constructive spirit, and has striven to contribute to the reconstruction of that country. Iraq, however, is only one of the many challenges facing the Council. During the first nine months of Brazil's current mandate in the Security Council, the Council has — to mention some of the major decisions taken — reformed and revitalized the main subsidiary committees entrusted with combating terrorism, namely the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999) concerning Al Qaeda and the Taliban and Associated Individuals and Entities and the CTC. The

Council also established a new committee to deal with the question of non-State actors' possible access to weapons of mass destruction.

In addition, the need for and the deployment of peacekeeping operations increased dramatically. Between civilian staff and military personnel, more than 67,000 people are involved in United Nations-mandated operations. During the period in question, new operations were created in Burundi, Haiti, Liberia and the Sudan, as the report of the Secretary-General indicates.

In Haiti, Brazil is contributing more than 1,200 military personnel to the stabilization efforts. We have accepted the responsibility of commanding the forces of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, with the important participation of other Latin American countries, on the clear understanding that peace in that nation in our hemisphere will require a long-term commitment from the international community — a commitment not only to security, but also to socio-economic progress. This leads to the necessity of increasing cooperation between the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, two of the main bodies of this Organization, an issue to which I will return later.

President Lula opened the general debate of the current session of the General Assembly with a wide-ranging presentation of Brazil's perception of the most pressing challenges facing the world today. The key element in this vision is the idea that the foundation of peace is social justice. As President Lula stated, a world in which hunger and poverty prevail cannot be a peaceful world.

As I turn to issues in the social and economic sphere, I must refer to the high-level plenary meetings scheduled to take place at the opening of the next session of the General Assembly. The event on the review of the progress achieved in the implementation of the Millennium Declaration constitutes the appropriate setting for the adoption of the necessary measures and actions to make viable the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals by the year 2015. There is a consensual appreciation that the decisions to be adopted next year will be crucial for the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

In this regard, the President of Brazil, together with the Presidents of France, Chile and Spain, and with the support of the Secretary-General, launched an "Action Against Hunger and Poverty" at a summit meeting attended by more than 50 world leaders gathered here in New York on the day before the opening of the general debate. More than 100 countries have already endorsed the New York Declaration on the Action against Hunger and Poverty, adopted at that summit meeting. The initiative achieved the intended objective of renewing the political will to search for new sources of financing. We are confident it will also be an important contribution to the success of the large upcoming event of 2005 reviewing the commitments contained in the Millennium Declaration, and to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

The Secretary-General entrusted the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change with the crucial task of identifying the problems faced by the Organization and with recommending the adjustments needed to correct the current situation. We look forward to the recommendations now being prepared by the Panel.

The Panel must avoid restricting its consideration of threats and challenges from the perspective of problems to be dealt with through coercion or the use of force. Its approach must be comprehensive, and its recommendations should encompass measures to strengthen not only the Security Council but also the other principal organs of the Organization.

In particular, the Panel must do its best to avoid expanding the scope of action of the Council in a manner that might detract from the mandated functions of other organs. Similarly, the Panel must make every effort to avoid misinterpreting current trends in the Council. The phenomenal increase in Council activity since the end of the cold war is an indication not only that the major impediments for the adoption of decisions were overcome, but also, and perhaps even more importantly, that the very foundations for international peace and security were becoming increasingly fragile.

As the Panel carries out its mandate, it must not overlook the international community's call for greater multilateralism. Heeding the main issues identified by the Secretary-General in his presentation of the report on the work of the Organization in the past two years, the Panel must present recommendations that will help right to prevail.

Brazil has well-known views with regard to the central issue of reform of the Organization, which I

will briefly reiterate as they relate to the principal organs at Headquarters. The Security Council must be strengthened and made more legitimate. Its composition, in particular relating to its permanent membership, cannot remain unaltered. The United Nations can no longer ignore the emergence on the international scene of developing countries that have become actors and often exercise a critical role in promoting the peaceful settlement of disputes. The Council must incorporate, on a permanent basis, countries that have the will and the capacity to take on major responsibilities with regard to the maintenance of international peace and security. Better representation means wider legitimacy, and wider legitimacy will lead to greater efficiency and efficacy in the work of the Council.

The Economic and Social Council, for its part, must regain the role bestowed upon it by the Charter. The causes of peace and social and economic development will be better served by an Economic and Social Council that is able to cooperate fully and actively with the Security Council in preventing conflicts and in nation-building. Better cooperation between these two bodies under Article 65 of the Charter is also a necessity. The scope of multilateral cooperation in conflict management and peace-building would thereby be broadened. Let us not forget that the Economic and Social Council, and not the Security Council, is the Charter organ with responsibility for matters relating to social and economic development.

One of the ways to improve the functioning of the Security Council itself is to empower the Economic and Social Council to fulfil its tasks, thus reducing the burden on the ever-increasing agenda of the Security Council.

The General Assembly, being the universal democratic organ, must be reinforced politically so as to guide the work of the Organization overall and to rekindle its status as the forum that traditionally embodies and gives voice to the purposes and principles of the Charter. Its function as the main deliberative and policy-making organ of the United Nations must be reasserted.

Next year promises to be decisive in the work of the Organization. As the Secretary-General put it in addressing our Presidents, Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers at the 3rd meeting of the current session of the General Assembly, "If you ... cannot reach agreement on the way forward, history will take the decisions for you, and the interests of your peoples may go by default."

Mr. Kazykhanov (Kazakhstan): At the outset, let me express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the work of the Organization, which, in fact, covers the entire agenda of the United Nations.

The maintenance of international peace and security remains the main priority for the international community. We fully agree with the conclusion that durable international peace could be built only on foundations of interdependence, rule of law and multilateralism. Kazakhstan believes that the United Nations acts as a guarantor of international law.

The report of the Secretary-General clearly demonstrates that the United Nations, carrying out a wide range of activities that reflect all the major international problems, has a great potential in coordinating the efforts of States to confront formidable challenges.

International terrorism continues to pose a threat to humanity. Countering this threat effectively requires the consolidation and coordination of global efforts on the basis of the generally recognized norms and principles of international law, with the leading and coordinating role being played by the United Nations.

It is crucial in that respect that the Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee more actively seek to develop new approaches to coordinating technical assistance to States, while closely linking such assistance to the strengthening of interaction with international and regional organizations. We believe that with the current escalation of international terrorism, the role of the Committee should become more important.

Kazakhstan has acceded to 11 international counter-terrorism conventions and calls for the earliest possible finalization by the United Nations of the drafting of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism and an international convention for the suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism.

The Government of Kazakhstan continues to increase its efforts to implement the Security Council resolutions in this sphere, including 1267 (1999), 1373 (2001), 1456 (2003) and 1535 (2004). The results of

those efforts are reflected in relevant national reports submitted by Kazakhstan.

My country supports United Nations peacekeeping efforts and the continued strengthening of its capacity in that area. With escalating humanitarian crises and armed conflicts, as effectively demonstrated by the developments in Darfur, the United Nations must pay special attention to the possibility of broader participation of authoritative regional and subregional organizations in peacekeeping operations; this would allow a more effective and more timely response to emerging threats.

Prevention, post-conflict peace-building and the protection of civilians in armed conflict are the key elements of the complex respons: of the United Nations to emerging crisis situations. Kazakhstan is therefore a firm supporter of preventive diplomacy and continues to believe that the establishment of a Central Asian preventive diplomacy centre would be a timely initiative.

Shared responsibility is a core element of the United Nations Millennium Declaration, adopted by world leaders in September 2000. Today, it has become clear that the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals is a reality for some countries and a distant hope for others.

It will be possible to reverse this trend only by developing international partnerships and building on the momentum gained at the turn of the millennium. We have 11 more years to achieve all of the goals set at the Millennium Summit. That is not very long. But even in that short period of time it is still possible to attain the agreed development targets. We believe that in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals we should apply a new focused approach to the assistance being provided to the least developed and geographically vulnerable States, including the landlocked countries, and create a favourable environment for their economic development under conditions of peace and stability.

A key factor for success could be an increase, in the near future, by the developed countries of their official development assistance to up to 0.7 per cent of their gross national product. Other important conditions include the mobilization of the domestic resources of the developing countries; a favourable climate for their exports; the prompt settlement of the debt of the poorest countries; and assistance to the Governments of the least developed countries for the expansion and strengthening of their educational programmes related to HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis.

During the World Leaders Summit on Action Against Hunger and Poverty, which was held at United Nations Headquarters last month, heads of State or Government declared that hunger jeopardizes the very concept of sustainable development — devised, against all odds, at the conferences held in New York, Monterrey and Johannesburg — and, together with poverty and social injustice, creates a serious threat to the security of States and entire regions of the world.

Kazakhstan firmly supports the main provisions of the Final Declaration of the Summit and believes that its outcome will provide much-needed impetus to our joint efforts to address critical issues in our action against hunger and poverty.

Poverty is a problem faced by virtually all developing countries and economies in transition, including Kazakhstan. My Government pays priority attention to efforts to combat poverty, and this has helped us to achieve significant progress in that important sphere. Unfortunately, the relevant United Nations reports contain some significant inaccuracies and, as a result, the international community has been provided with distorted information about the social and economic situation in my country.

The issue of rehabilitation after natural and ecological disasters remains, as before, a focus of the United Nations. Kazakhstan is grateful to the United Nations and donor countries for their attention to the problems of the Semipalatinsk region and the Aral Sea area, as well as for their support, and calls on the international community to intensify its efforts to solve those problems. We believe that a special General Assembly resolution on the Aral Sea has long been overdue, since continued degradation of the environment of the region seriously affects the health and livelihood of the population.

Next year we will celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations. This will provide an excellent opportunity for us to take a fresh look at the problems of our world and the ways in which our Organization can address them. Kazakhstan is ready to contribute to that critically important process.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.